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| Role of email author DA =District Administrator, SA =School Administrator, T =Teacher, S3 =School Support Services, SB =School Board, S =Student, P =Parent, C =Community Member, L =Legislator, K = K Group, CP =College Professor | |
| C - Email 3/10/16 | How should we measure school success? I believe we should measure school success by measuring student growth as well as a school's investment in all students and personalized staff development along with its robust return on that investment. |
| P - Email - 3/10/16 | What do you expect from our schools? I am a parent in Mason County. Teacher evaluations should not be tied to student assessments. Period. These assessments, such as kprep, are pointless for students as well. When the results return in October of the following school year principals and committees pour over the data but not one person has ever pulled me and my child aside and said, "he struggles here let's help him." Not once. So that further solidifies to me that these test are driven by funds from the Feds. The data they mine is more precious to you than my child. I can prove that. Last year I refused the kprep for both of my children. It is my right as a parent to do so. They were made to sit for hours with a lunch lady in an empty class all testing days. No alternate work, nothing to read, no drawing, no nothing. Then they couldn't attend the end of the year field trip because they didn't give a good faith effort. That tells me their score matters more than their well being. I have A/B students. Good kids who try hard but they were treated like outcast during testing because I, as their parent, decided this was best for them. That is when you know there is too much emphasis on testing and not enough on education. Our school doesn't have a gym teacher or a librarian but we can find time and resources to spend two weeks before kprep having pep rallies and parties and writing 3.8 paragraphs about how we plan to do well on the test. Pitiful. Studies prove children who have more recess and less homework and testing thrive and excel further in reading and math. |
| T - Email - 3/11/16 | What do you expect from our schools? First of all, thank you for allowing teachers the opportunity to give feedback on the accountability system. I have taught 5th grade in Kentucky for almost 16 years, and I have more concerns now than I ever had before the implementation of Common Core, and especially the new accountability/testing requirements. 5th grade students are currently tested in the subjects of Math, Social Studies, Reading, and Writing (On-Demand). We spend an entire week testing (for several hours a day) at the end of the school year. The pressure put on the students during this week of testing is unbelievable, and I believe, excessive for 10-11 year old children. I also do not believe that the current test accurately reflects their knowledge nor their achievement/growth. Being the Writing teacher, I directly deal primarily with the On-Demand preparation and practice. The students come to me at the beginning of the school year in August, struggling to write a complete paragraph. Some, sadly, even struggle with writing a complete sentence. By the end of their 5th grade year, the majority of my students make great improvements in their writing, and they are proudly able to organize their thoughts into paragraphs and produce entire essays, speeches, letters, etc. It is unfortunate that this growth and success are not accurately reflected by the On-Demand scores, and thus, cause the students to feel unsuccessful. I personally believe that student growth and achievement would be better and more accurately assessed by testing the student's writing skills at the beginning of the year, and then testing the student again at the end of the year to individually check for the personal growth of each student. I do not believe growth should be measured by comparing one entire group of students to the group that came before them. I also do not believe that neither growth nor success can be shown by comparing an entire school to another school via school rankings. This inevitably causes unethical practices and unnecessary competition between school districts. It also causes teachers to feel the pressure to “teach the test” even though we, as individual schools, deny pressuring teachers to do so. Having taught for 16 years, I have seen a lot of changes in the education system come and go. This is the first time I have felt as disheartened by our accountability system. Even though each grade level is supposed to have equal academic pressure for student success, the accountability of the test scores explicitly falls on the grade levels/teachers that are tested, instead of being consistently monitored and emphasized throughout each grade level. There has to be a better, more consistent way to assess growth and achievement. Another issue I have with the current test is that I receive no anecdotal feedback on my students’ individual On-Demand scores. As a classroom teacher, I am expected (and required) to give my students feedback they can apply to future writings to make continued improvements, yet the state fails to provide this kind of feedback to me when scoring the test. Without an explanation of the mistakes my students are making, it is impossible to know what my students need to work on in the future. Grading and scoring any writing task is a very subjective, and the general scoring guide released from the state does not provide much insight. |

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| T | <p>What do you expect from our schools? Kentucky educational accountability is a system of unrealistic goals set so high that many schools must cheat in order not to be punished by tyrannous district leaders while the curriculum is spoon-fed to students so that they can graduate in four years without ever being held accountable for their education and not learning one of the most important lessons in life—responsibility. The word “cheat” is not the issue here because this system has created a monster for teachers—damned if you do, damned if you don’t. The words that need to be addressed here are “unrealistic goals” set for students and teachers. When Kentucky created the levels for senior portfolios years ago, it was hell. Teachers had to make students proficient or better in writing without giving them any feedback on their writing, crazy, and the distinguished level’s criteria was set so high that published novelist could not achieve it. Now, the teacher-evaluation standards are ridiculous. The accomplished level should be renamed “god-level” since to maintain that teaching style, one would have to be a super-human being—one more example of Kentucky setting impossible goals. I have taught in this mess for twenty-one years, and it isn’t getting any better and students see themselves as tests’ scores and hate school because they are pushed to achieve in areas they are not equipped for cognitively and this causes our children with disabilities to see themselves as failures while, at the same time, the curriculum is watered down to meet the graduation rate and not hold students who are able accountable by making them take some responsibility for their education. A good cure for this mange may be to not have one test or curriculum for all ability levels. Some students should be regular ed. and some should be vocational ed. and their education should be a geared toward this. Furthermore, teachers are not treated as professionals but must be monitored constantly like psycho child killers. How upsetting to have an advanced degree and not be trusted to do what is needed for students. Some central offices employ too many administrators to monitor teacher actions but not enough teachers to give students a well-rounded education. Who are these people who set for teachers and students these unachievable goals, unfair rules and waste millions in taxpayer dollars on unfair tests and overpaid administrators? Have they ever been in a classroom other than as a student? Do they realize that teachers can’t take a child with a 67 IQ and make him/her perform at the same level as a student with an average IQ? Do they realize that as drugs become more prevalent in our society, many more of our students are going to be born with irreparable learning disabilities. Teachers can’t fix this. These students will need more life-skill-type educational opportunities instead of calculus and chemistry. Teachers have been pushed to breaking points and many great educators are leaving this field because they have been asked to do the impossible or must compromise their morals and cheat to keep from being severely punished on the district and state levels. This must stop. To compete with other countries, we must create two educational systems especially for high-school students—one for regular ed. and one for vocational ed. with two different accountability systems and teach our students responsibility by holding them accountable.</p> |
| T - Email - 3/10/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? I expect our schools to give students an education that is going to help them be successful in the next grade and in the future. The standards are written so each year builds on what was taught the previous year. I’m not sure that some teachers even know what some of the standards say at their grade level. For example, I would guess that a lot of primary teachers have no idea what the writing standard says at their grade.</p> |
| same | <p>What school characteristics are most important? High expectations for teachers and students. Not just for accountability areas, but for every aspect of the standards</p> |
| same | <p>How should we measure school success? I think there should be an assessment given in the fall and in the spring to measure student growth from the beginning of the school year to the end. I think that every subject should be part of the accountability system at every grade level (Reading, Math, Writing, Science, and Social Studies).</p> |
| same | <p>How do we ensure all schools are successful? Stop changing and adding things to accountability in the middle of the year. It seems like every other year or so we find out in the Spring that something is going to be different about the accountability system. It very much seems like the accountability system is designed so teachers, students, and schools are not successful. Every time schools start scoring well, which I would think would be the goal, the system changes and we start from square one. I completely understand that change is necessary and a good thing most of the time, but it always seems like the change with accountability makes us less successful instead of more successful. It’s very frustrating as a teacher and parent to know that your students and your own child are going to be labeled with a number or a title (novice, apprentice, proficient, distinguished) and that’s how their viewed. It’s never taken into account that those students might start the year as a novice and be an apprentice by the end of the school year. Again, I am not stupid, I know that there must be some sort of way to measure student growth and to hold teachers accountable, but I just don’t think our way is the best way. It definitely needs some improvement.</p> |
| same | <p>How should we celebrate school success? I think success should be celebrated from the beginning of the school year until the end. I think it should be about how much progress and growth students make from August until May. Assessment shouldn’t be this big thing that happens in May - it should be a natural part of what we’re already doing. K-Prep has brought so much testing with it – we do Aimsweb to see where kids are throughout the year, we do MAP testing three times a year because that is supposed to predict what students will score on K-Prep, we do our classroom formative and summative assessments, and then we have K-Prep testing at the very end of school.</p> |

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| T - Email 3/16/16 | What do you expect from our schools? Social Studies cannot, must not, be treated as an afterthought. Social Studies cannot be adequately covered in other content areas, not can other content areas afford to lose time on their own content to cover another. These teachers need their standards, and students need an adequate understanding of history so as not to repeat and to be civic-minded adults. Add a social studies test if necessary to cover US, World Civ., Ecodynamics, etc, if needed instead of the EOC. |
| same | What school characteristics are most important? Program Review needs to go away. Immediately. All it has accomplished is to take away time & resources from other content areas. Most of these "lessons" are contrived activities that serve no purpose other than to document for PR. |
| same | How should we measure school success? COMPASS testing should still be an option. With many of our students going to out of state colleges, KYOTE is of no benefit to them. Also, only allowing 2 windows to achieve CCR status puts these students, and their respective schools, at a disadvantage. The KYOTE also puts more work on teachers in that ELA teachers will have to be trained to score other schools' essays. Where is that time going to come from? |
| same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? If ACT is the true marker for CCR, then let's focus testing on the ACT instead of having so many other types of tests. Instead of ODW, why not make the ACT essay a requirement? |
| same | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions If the lack of science content on the ACT is a concern, then add a science test. |
| SA - Email - 3/7/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? I have so many thoughts about school accountability. I know it is a necessity. We MUST be held accountable for how we are preparing students for college and/or career. In my 21 years in Kentucky, it has been done in a variety of ways. Honestly, the one we have now seems about as “fair” as any we’ve had before. The fact that there are numerous factors that decide a school's score is fairer than what we’ve had in the past. We as educators like that things like growth are part of our accountability. When you get a 6th grader who reads on a 2nd grade level, it is going to be difficult to get that student to proficiency in one year. But, we SHOULD be able to “grow” that student and having that in the accountability makes sense. I can’t say that I have a perfect system for how schools should be held accountable. What I can say is that I don’t believe the “score” a school gets in any particular year is necessarily indicative of the work the teachers and staff are doing. I truly believe that the staff of a school can work their tails off, implementing numerous best practices, and the school could still score “needs improvement” or whatever “bad” classification is placed on them. I’ve often said that I truly believe that (for the most part) you could take the teachers of School A (that is not scoring among the top 30% in the state) and move those teachers to School B (that is scoring in the top 30% in the state) and both schools would score close to the same way the scored before the change. I guess what I am trying to say is that just because a school does not score Proficient, Distinguished, School of Distinction, etc..doesn’t mean the staff in that school are bad educators. As a matter of fact, I believe many of the educators at School A are a WAY better fit for that school than many of School B's teachers would be. There are so many factors that can determine how a school scores. There is so much more to it than a test that is taken near the end of the school year. I do believe that there are exceptional school leaders and teachers that can and do make a HUGE difference in schools. If School A is performing poorly, there may be a new leader out there somewhere that could come turn the school around. I just firmly believe that is not always the case. It is not always the fault of the principal and/or teachers. As I stated before, there are so many factors that have an effect on how a school performs. Bourbon County Middle School has been Proficient for the last three years. (After the latest quality control we were actually classified Distinguished for 2015.) We are very proud of the great things going on here. We certainly can continue to grow, and we plan to do so. We've been working hard this year to ensure that we continue to improve. It has been an interesting year. We've had 5 teachers out for extended periods of time with pregnancies and the birth of their children. We've had another teacher out for numerous weeks after finding out she had cervical cancer. About 2 months into the year another teacher abruptly retired due to a disability. Of these 6 total teachers, 4 of them teach in areas that will be tested in 2016. Although our substitute teachers did a fine job in their absence, there is nothing like having the certified teacher in the room. My gut tells me it HAD to affect our overall level of learning. If we are unlucky enough to not score as well as we have for the last 3 years I can see these issues having something to do with it. Does it mean we all of the sudden forgot how to teach or implement best practices into our school? Obviously that would not be the case. We are doing everything we have in the past and more! But things like these can have an impact on a school's score. It doesn't mean a school did a poor job of teaching that year. Unfortunately when the scores come out, the public (and even some educators) look at the scores and decide how good the teachers and leaders of a school are based on that score. It's almost like if you are a “proficient” or higher school you take a deep breath. I just don’t think that is fair. I wish there was another way to determine how a school is doing. I'm well aware that when the rubber hits the road it is about getting students to proficiency. That is our job and we take it very seriously. It is not always easy. One way that might make it more “fair” is to classify how schools are performing over a period of time, not every year. A 3 year cycle of accountability might make more sense. Over that 3 year span, a school could be held accountable for all of the students it has gotten to proficiency and all of the students that they have “grown” over that period of time. This may not be the perfect system, as none likely are. But it would be a better picture of how a school is doing over time rather than in one year. When a school implements new strategies, hires new people, gets a new principal, it takes time to get those things where they need to be. Maybe a 3 year cycle would be better? Regardless, I think it is very important to keep growth in the accountability system. As I stated earlier, when you get a student who is far from proficiency, if you help them improve toward meeting that goal, it means a lot!</p> <p>We are also looking forward to having social studies and science back in the accountability system. This needs to happen asap.</p> |

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| C - Email - 3/16/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? My first concern is that the educational system in general and vocational classes specifically have turned into a numbers game. I believe too many financial and curriculum decisions are being made from a numbers matrix that combines enrollment, career paths, test scores, past graduation rates, etc. without regard to the best interest of the students. Part of the credentialing process for NIMS is for me to interview the administrators of the school and I constantly hear that they had to do this or that to make numbers. My interpretation of this based on my last visit is that they are making decisions to insure that the students can test well for the ACT. In other words, teaching to the test. There is an additional issue with this and it relates to instructional time in the Vo-Tech classes. The 55 minute blocks are simply not enough time for students in the trade classes. Period. Even a double block of 110 minutes is still barely enough time to be effective. On a previous NIMS visit I had an instructor tell me that he is about to retire early because the minimal amount of time in the class is simply not worth the effort and feels personal defeat in the goals of teaching the trade.</p> |
| same | <p>How should we measure school success? The no child left behind initiative - now the ESSA – in my opinion is what has destroyed the educational system and has caused the exact opposite. While politically it is nice to say that every child succeeds, and they do thanks to the ever revolving and lowering of standards at which success is measured, ultimately no child will excel. What good is a diploma when everyone is granted one? The no child left behind initiative - now the ESSA – in my opinion is what has destroyed the educational system and has caused the exact opposite. While politically it is nice to say that every child succeeds, and they do thanks to the ever revolving and lowering of standards at which success is measured, ultimately no child will excel. What good is a diploma when everyone is granted one? Once again, my NIMS evaluations allow me to interact with students and talk to them while they are in the classrooms and shop. In a recent visit, an example came up where the student couldn't do a simple subtraction of decimals without a calculator. But this same student took enough remedial classes to meet the number required on the ACT test. This is evidence that the system is teaching to the test and not to the advancement and betterment of the education of our youth.</p> |
| same | <p>How do we ensure all schools are successful? In decades past, vocational classes/schools were generally thought of as the catch all for students that did not excel in traditional classes. However, with the revitalization of industry along with the many technological advancements, it is now more than ever important to develop a career ready workforce in hard skills. These hard skills can lead to a multitude of job placement opportunities with pay scales equal to, and in many cases more than, a college graduate. You can spend hours upon hours going down worm holes on the internet over the subject, but periodicals ranging from the Wall Street Journal to Modern Machine Shop (a trade publication) monthly if not weekly publish articles warning that the skills gap is real and could even jeopardize the national security of the United States.</p> |
| same | <p>How should we celebrate school success? I also know that the local community (Greater Louisville Area) has lost out on several major companies opening or expanding due to the lack of skilled labor. The one most notable for me was the Harley-Davidson motorcycle expansion. While not the only reason for them choosing another location, lack of skilled labor was a considerable reason why they did not choose to relocate here in Kentucky.</p> |
| SA - Email - 3/16/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? I am very concerned about the changes with changes in the Accountability System due to the Novice Reduction. I agree the it's a “moral imperative” that we reduce the number of novice in our state but the system of measuring this is fundamentally unfair to schools that have worked hard to be successful in the past. I am principal of a K-8 school that has close to 600 students, with almost 80% of students qualifying for Free/Reduced Lunch Program. We have been a successful school in the past- Our Elementary has received the Distinguished label for the last two years (Proficient before that); our Middle school received a rating of Distinguished/ School Of Distinction/ High Progressing School this year. In the 2014 school year we had under 10% novice in almost all areas (roughly 150 students tested). With the changes in the Accountability System for Novice Reduction our scores would have gone down tremendously due to a slight increase in the number of novice in 2015- even though the percentage of novice was still much lower than any school in our region. The schools that had a large percentage of novice in 2014 that reduced their percentage of novice slightly were rewarded/received additional points even though their percentage of novice was 3-4 times higher than our school. A perfect example was an area where we had 13 out of 152 (8.6%) students score novice in 2014 ; in 2015 we had 13 out of 140 (9.3%)- the same number of novice but fewer students causing a higher percentage. Another school in our district had 14 out of 38 (37%) students score novice in 2014; in 2015 they had 14 out of 42 (33%)- the same number of novice students but more students in 2015 causing a lower percentage. Based on the new formula even though we had fewer novice both years and a lower percentage both years we would receive zero points (and based on the formula that would be over 16% of the total accountability- plus growth) but the other school will receive a “full “ allotment of possible points- even though they have more students novice and their percentage of novice is 3+times what ours is. I don't think anyone could say the second school is a higher performing school than ours- every other facet of the accountability system shows that- but due to the changes in the accountability system the second school will look like they are outperforming us. To say that the new way of calculating scores is unfair is an understatement- schools that have worked hard for years to be successful will be punished whereas schools that show a little growth will be greatly rewarded. There has to be a better way that will address the percentage of novice a school has while not penalizing schools that have worked hard and shown a commitment to students for years.</p> |
| T - Email - 3/17/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? First, we have got to include a plan for alternate assessment up front in planning a new accountability system. In addition to academics we should support and encourage the inclusion of daily living skills and alternate demonstrations of growth for kids that academics (complex academics) are not functional. We also need to start early by looking at what preschool students are expected to do. The EKARS eval is great, but the Brigance assessment does NOT align with pre-K standards or developmentally appropriate instructional needs. Districts are telling teachers to not teach standards and teach the TEST/Brigance so they don't lose funds. Program reviews are a LOT of work, but helpful in helping us plan whole school focus and including the arts in education.</p> |

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| T - E-mail - 3/7/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions Attendance should be part of the transcript. A degree earned (I say this with tongue in cheek) by a student with an IEP should be noted as such. Many students with an IEP earn the same degree as a non IEP student but rarely had to work as hard. Social promotion must end. I have 9th grade students who have a 2nd or 3rd grade reading level. (how does this happen?). I also have students who have yet to learn how to multiply and divide at the ninth grade level. I know a calculator is a good tool to have but some of the basics , such as multiplication tables should never be dismissed. |
| T - e-mail - 3/7/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I REALLY want our students to get the most out of their education, but really and truly, I don't think they should be punished by attending school into the end of May/first of June. Especially, when they start the first week of August. Our school has always started early, and students, as well as teachers are so worn out by the end of May we can barely stand each other. I also, think this late ending date, hurts our test scores as well. My thinking is if a county is declared an emergency for weather, or whatever the reason, that should be taken into account when it comes to make-up days. No one should have to suffer through what Mother Nature gives. |
| T - e-mail - 3/7/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I have been concerned for some time about the status of vision screenings / vision exams in our schools. While we routinely have vision screenings in grades 3,5 and 7, I feel that it is important to do a thorough, valid eye exam upon entry into Kindergarten. It is very easy for a child with visual issues to go unidentified up until Grade 3, especially if there was an invalid exam done at the time of pre-school entry. Once the eye report from the invalid exam is turned in , the parents have "met" the requirement put forth by KRS 156.160 (1) (g) and the child is not seen again by an optometrist / ophthalmologist until required after a vision screening in 3rd grade. By eliminating this barrier to learning(poor vision), I hope to increase our student's achievement in the classroom. Regulation: KRS 156.160 (1) (g) requires proof of a vision examination by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. This evidence shall be submitted to the school no later than January 1 of the first year that a three (3), four (4), five (5) or six (6) year old child is enrolled in public school, public preschool, or Head Start program. National Statistics: 1 in 4 students have some type of undiagnosed visual problem. Most are very mild, but all visual deficiencies can negatively impact learning. Since 80% of what we learn comes to us through our visual sense, it is easy to understand that if our vision is impaired, our learning will be inefficient. Rationale: If our students cannot see clearly, their process of learning is inefficient, regardless of the skills of the classroom teacher. This will negatively impact their acquisition of fundamental skills, the foundation for all future learning. Although most eye reports are submitted upon entry into preschool, many preschoolers tested were unable to be assessed by their eye care physician. Reasons cited include, but are not limited to “Not able to assess”, “uncooperative”, “Too young to test”, “Too shy – wouldn’t respond”. While the preschool exams should not be eliminated, because they are effective for some of the students, they should not be entirely relied on for overall eye health as the child enters Kindergarten. As children grow, their visual needs change and should be monitored periodically. Eye exams should be mandatory upon entry to K. The students are better able to respond to visual prompts, making the exams more valid. Exams that are valid will result in better eye care for students. Those who are diagnosed with conditions such as amblyopia may be able to get the care they need so that this reversible condition can be treated and corrected. Vision can be saved in many instances. Amblyopia treatment is effective up until age 8-9, depending on the child. Once the therapeutic threshold is gone, the child is left with the resulting vision, only to be corrected by glasses, if possible. Referral for special education, if needed, is expedited. The students can get the academic help they need much faster. Those students who are functioning at an "apprentice" level with an undiagnosed / untreated eye condition has the potential to score " proficient" or "distinguished" with proper eye treatment. Eye exams should be mandatory upon entry to 6th grade. As I said before, as children grow, their visual needs change....they are reading in greater volumes, longer assignments, smaller print, more screen time, etc. At this time, a vision screening is requested on the 6th grade physical form, however, it may / may not consistently be addressed by the pediatrician doing the physical exam. Therefore, any needed referral for additional eye care may / may not happen. The mandatory requirement of a 6th grade entry eye exam, eliminates this issue. It is my hope that you will take the time to look into this issue further... Since all health information is required to be put into Infinite Campus, you may check numbers statewide to see information such as: # of preschool vision exams recorded / # marked invalid, # of K exams / # marked invalid.....compare with Pre-School numbers, # of 6th grade physical forms turned in / # of eye screenings logged / # of valid eye exams turned in as a result of the 6th grade physical. As children are checked and rechecked, in between the mandatory testing times, all eye exams should be submitted to the school nurse so that they can be: Logged into Infinite Campus, Child's vision can be monitored for changes that will adversely affect his/her classroom performance. Shared with the Teacher of the Blind / Visually Impaired of the school district -- if the nurse sees a need for further vision evaluation. Nurse / TBVI can make recommendations for student visual needs to the teacher(s) instructing the student in order to maximize the child's classroom experience. Thank you for considering all the information / ideas that I have put before you. I hope that we can see some positive changes so that are students may have the best educational experience possible. |

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| C - E-mail - 3/12/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments, Questions You better believe I'll be there . . . as you make your way to the western end of the Commonwealth; in 2002, when I retired the first time, I made my little retirement speech (through tears) and and said, "You won't be able to find enough teachers, one day. And I am sorry that I can't take it either. What I'm really sorry about is that all of you" --speaking to my colleagues who had to stay behind-- "are not having as good a time as I once had, because . . .I had a ball. I told myself that when I could no longer have a good time and teach my kids, that I hoped I had enough years to retire." I worked 20 hours a week at an adolescent day treatment center for the next five years, and then finally retired (the 2nd time).</p> <p>And now, I am 67-years-old, and I am in the classroom AGAIN -- as a full-time "Critical Shortage" teacher, as my prediction came true -- they can't find enough teachers. I am horrified--saddened--devastated. Two days before school started, I was sitting on the beach, but then . . . I went from "Teacher of the Year" (in the last century) to, "We really need to hire you because we can't find anybody else." And, I'm better than nothing--sadder yet is that . . well . . I'll bring that speech with me. :(My ADT principal compared me to "an honored elder" in the "tribe". As long as I can keep learning the paperwork and find enough hours in the day to do it, I can still make a little difference, but I'm going to wear out shortly. I'm on my second batch of steroids for the year. I've had a great time again -- worn completely out -- the kids taught me about everything I needed to know about how to write on the board (!), and I've watched teachers wide-eyed in astonishment as I limped into the building, saying, "Gosh, we're sure glad you're here, but . . . why?" Since I got my Life teaching certificate in 1970 at UK and have spent nearly all that time in Kentucky schools with a few years in the Department of Defense Overseas System, I've got some pretty good ideas about "why", and I'm scared to death that I now have a lifelong career, because I don't see too many other people standing in line for my job. :(My kids are great (most of them), and I don't intend to desert them--the system--not so much. I didn't expect this kind of job security. My college advisor (way back in the 60s) said, "You're one of the last to get a Life Certificate -- I bet it will come in handy one day. The man was apparently a fortune-teller. I hope to spend some time crafting some ideas that don't sound so much like a rant -- as some serious suggestions. The bottom line is that somebody is going to have to start taking care of the teachers, or it's not going to make any difference, whatsoever, how many mandates and reforms that are created. Nobody will be home -- in the classroom. :(Kentucky's children will be fending for themselves with a bunch of pinch-hitters and old folks who really just need to be playing Bingo for Tootsie Rolls. I'm just really lucky to be in a school where the kids respect their elders -- I chose it carefully -- there were seven schools in a radius of 40 miles that were missing teachers the first day of school. I got lucky.</p> |
| S3 - e-mail - 3/14/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I have NO idea why anyone would think reducing the # of instructional days is good for our students. According to Education Week, March 14,2016, the state of Kentucky ranks 29th in the 50 states and District of Columbia. Less instructional time is NOT going to improve our ranking. One of the main reasons for reducing instructional time is to help boost the deteriorating income generated by our State Parks? Um, I'm a fairly intelligent adult and fail to see how this will generate income to for the State Park System. When I had children in public schools, we'd schedule our vacations according to their days off and those days off had no impact on whether we'd vacation at a State Park or go elsewhere. Anyone dedicated to vacationing at State Parks is going to find the time to do so, whether their kids get 12 more days of non-school time or not. I'm a classified employee so my salary is going to be affected. I consider that a secondary cause for concern. My primary concern, as a resident of this state and an employee of the state's public school system is that what we DON'T need is less time in a classroom. We provide a safe environment, food, supervision, opportunities to develop social skills....the list goes on and on (and this is on top of the obvious learning opportunity).</p> <p>How do we expect the students from Kentucky to compete with students from around the world for jobs in technology, industry, arts, etc if they have less instructional time? I'm horrified that this thought was event entertained much less given the weight to require a vote</p> |

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| C - e-mail - 3/15/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments, Questions Thank you for taking the time to travel around the state and listen to the people who are on the frontlines in Kentucky education. I hesitated to make any comments last night because my role hinges on me having a positive relationship with the administration of both schools, and I fear that my observations about things that need to change could be received poorly by the administrators who have a stake in those things. I have served intermittently as a substitute teacher while serving in my primary role at Shelbyville’s hospital as violence prevention coordinator, where I implement a program into the local high schools that addresses bullying, dating violence, and sexual assault. In addition, my wife is a kindergarten teacher in another district. My comments don’t really have anything to do with school climate/safety, substitute teachers, or early childhood education (though I do think the impact school climate and early childhood education have on academic achievement is underappreciated), but in those two roles I have had the unique experience of being able to see hundreds of classrooms and to work collaboratively with dozens of teachers. When I talk to teachers about things that make it difficult for them to be effective, or about things that would make them more effective, almost all of them talk about classroom size. You mentioned that you want Kentucky education to be informed by the people most closely involved with students, and I think if that’s true, classroom size and/or teacher-to-student ratio needs to be on the forefront of the minds of everyone in Frankfort. It’s possible to cut classroom sizes in half without cutting the overall budget. The problem is that the kinds of cuts that you would have to make would most directly impact the people closest to those who make budgeting decisions, so it’s hard to imagine a scenario where it would actually happen. It would require changes in the ranking system and pay scale in Kentucky education so that only principals and superintendents had a higher salary than teachers. You wouldn’t have to increase teacher pay to do this, but you would have to [sometimes significantly] decrease pay for many positions, including principals and superintendents. These kinds of changes would incentivize the best teachers to remain teachers rather than being “promoted” to positions outside the classroom, and they would ensure that people outside the classroom are there because they actually want to be there rather than because they have a higher salary there. It would also require personnel cuts in administrative positions, administrative assistant positions, and other positions outside the classroom like instructional coaches. In addition to this, the schools would need to focus less on infrastructure and technology. Like you, I’m not a lifelong Kentuckian, and the first impression I had when I moved a few years ago was that Kentucky has the nicest educational buildings I’ve ever seen. That, in and of itself, is obviously a good thing, but it actually becomes an indictment when you consider the negligible correlation between building aesthetics and academic achievement. There’s also a lot of overspending in unnecessary professional development that would need to be cut. I could go on and on about potential cuts, but the point is that, if school systems truly value student success, they need to pour their money into the places that would most positively impact students. My second comment is about how we define school success, which was the overarching question for last night’s town hall. My fear is that defining success is a dangerous endeavor. Unless you define success in the most all-encompassing way, you will be presenting school systems with tremendous temptations to only pursue what has been defined as successful. One temptation is to focus less on potentially important things that are left out by how success gets defined; we see this where fields like the arts have been neglected. A second temptation is to make it easier for students to achieve success as it has been defined, which ultimately makes them less successful in everything they will face outside the education system. If we call a student successful by giving them a piece of paper after 12th grade and they go into college or a career and fail, then it is ultimately a failure on the school’s part to define success in a way that was not true of reality. Failure can be a great preparer and motivator of success, so we can’t allow students to continue to move up the rungs of the educational ladder without actually taking a step. This happens all the time, and this is what happens when we define success and pressure schools to have such and such percentage of the students meeting that definition of success. Teachers are pressured to pass students that don’t have a passing-level understanding of content. Instructional time is stolen by practice tests and assemblies about how to get better test scores. This all comes from how we define success. The schools that are the most successful are the ones whose students succeed when they leave, and if our definition of success doesn’t reflect that reality, then we’re doing it wrong and hurting students in the process. I’d love to know your thoughts on these issues, and I hope the rest of your tour goes well. I am looking forward to seeing our schools improve because of your efforts.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 3/23/16 | <p>How do we ensure all schools are successful? All schools do something everyday and get no credit for: Limit barriers to learning. Could schools use data to prove they have reduced barriers to learning as a part of their accountability score? Research shows that participating in physical activity and that physical education IMPROVES student attendance, test scores, participation and enthusiasm for other academic subjects, motivation to learn, and reduces discipline referrals. Evidence also shows that effective school health education reduces student participation in behaviors such as smoking, heavy drinking, school misbehavior and violence.</p> |
| | <p>Miscellaneous Comments, Questions My name is Daniel Hill- a national board certified elementary PE teacher here in Lexington. I've had the pleasure of being a physical educator over 15 years now! I am here as a state board member of Kahperd_ KY association of health, PE, recreation and dance. I would like to personally and on behalf of our almost 1000 members - THANK YOU for providing these town hall KY Listens opportunities for teachers. Most of the students here in Fayette County, my own two sons included, have excellent schools that provide high quality health and PE programs! Not every student in Kentucky is as lucky. KY is currently 1 of 7 states without an elementary PE requirement; and 1 of 10 states without a middle school requirement. Our current HS requirement is only 1/2 credit for all Four years of high school which puts us dead last out of all 50 states in terms of PE requirements. Most parents I speak with about this are shocked! With the recent passage of ESSA - every student succeeds act CONGRESS included Health and PE as a part of a student's WELL ROUNDED education. Now federal money can be used to improve health and PE! This is a huge opportunity for the state of Kentucky! I am challenging all Kentucky education leaders to follow the lead of our national leaders by elevating health and PE requirements in KY. On behalf of KAHPERD we WOULD like to THANK YOU again for this opportunity to speak here this evening.</p> |

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| T - e-mail - 3/23/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments, Questions Once again, I'd like to say thank you for coming to Campbellsville last night to meet with the education stakeholders in our area. I've been teaching for over 16 years, and I have never had the opportunity to meet our Commissioner of Education in person, much less have the Commissioner come to my area and invite me to attend. I think it speaks very highly of you and what you want to accomplish for the students in Kentucky. I'm writing to you this morning because of an encounter I had with two high school students last night, after the Town Hall meeting at Campbellsville University. Both of these young ladies go to school with my oldest son. One is in 10th grade, the other 11th. High school students are in the midst of scheduling classes for next year, so, as you can imagine, the lack of an arts career pathway is popping up for these kids and creating conflicts and negative feelings. Both of these young ladies had previously chosen arts pathways - one in music, the other in visual art. And both of them were told this week that they must choose another career pathway to complete before they graduate. In fact, the person to whom these girls spoke took it a step further and told them they should reconsider their college majors because both of those majors (music and art) were almost pointless. I don't know to whom these girls spoke, whether it was a teacher, an administrator, a guidance counselor, or a CCR person, but both of these extremely talented girls were offended and discouraged. I explained to them that they should involve their parents in a dialogue with school administration, because completing a career pathway is NOT a graduation requirement. (I know this because my husband and I recently had that conversation with the high school guidance counselor, concerning our middle school child who will be entering high school and would choose the arts if that career pathway was still an option.) I believe that many high school teachers are simply misinformed about the career pathways, that they have come to the belief that all students must complete one, regardless of whether or not there is a pathway that matches the student's interests or talents. I also believe that many, many high schools are leading students and their parents to believe that completing a career pathway is a requirement, so that the school can "cash in" on that half point bonus. This is NOT happening in the school system where I teach, but I have heard from SO MANY arts educators that their students are being TOLD that the MUST complete a pathway in order to graduate, even if it means they have to drop out of band, choir, art, or drama courses. Students and parents follow this path blindly, totally believing that the schools are being honest with them about the "requirement". So, I'm writing to ask you to please make some kind of statement to high school administrators and superintendents clarifying the career pathway situation. Last night, you said to all of us in the room that "it is wrong to pull kids out of limited-tested areas" to place them in career pathway courses for the sake of that half point. There are many, many superintendents, principals, guidance counselors, and CCR counselors who need to hear that and put it into practice. And there is a multitude of parents and students who need to be aware that the career pathway is not a graduation requirement, and that their schools may be being less than honest with them about that.</p> |
| P - e-mail - 3/24/16 | <p>All of these items I just stated are barriers to learning and can be limited by elevating health and PE in KY! In closing I wanted to quote my middle school health teacher: "At some point in your life, you will have days that all you care about is your health!" My son Ethan is 15 years old has Autism. He has an IEP and will receive an alternative diploma. I would like for him to be able to have the college experience and pick up some employment skills if he chooses after high school. What can we do for him? He is like most teenagers and doesn't know what he wants to do other than be a dinosaur digger. I am going to try to come to the Bowling Green meeting.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 3/24/16 | <p>What do you expect from our schools? I expect schools to provide teachers with the tools (more computers or tablets) in order for teachers to use technology in Elementary school classrooms. I also expect them to support teachers in not only supplies but in student behavior. (I am very blessed to teacher where this happens, and I believe its essential to be a successful teacher.)</p> |
| same | <p>What school characteristics are most important? I believe an involved staff in extra after-school activities is very important, but I also believe in respecting teachers time. To many after school events run into teachers family time, but I believe in teacher presence at after-school events.</p> |
| same | <p>How should we measure school success? By growth. Not by "expected" growth but by student growth, whether they grow 2 points or 15, some students are not capable of the full growth. While others are. When we judge teachers on students "expected growth" we miss their actual growth.</p> |
| same | <p>How do we ensure all schools are successful? By keep good data on student learning. Also by not overwhelming teachers with paperwork, allowing them time to plan and work in their rooms. When we focus all our time on paperwork being put into CIITS or other programs it takes away from teachers preparing lessons, assessments, and making their room great. While I know some paperwork and recording of data is imperative, we have taking it a little far. I also believe in observation, administrators being in and out of classrooms to ensure student engagement and learning is happening. I believe administrators should allow space (again I am very blessed to have amazing supportive administrators!) but be involved.</p> |
| same | <p>How should we celebrate school success? By providing teachers/schools with classroom supplies, if your school is successful then your school should get extra money to give to teachers for needed items or cool new technology items to be used in the classroom. I think more that food and parties teachers would love to have more items to use in their classroom for engagement and learning! Instead of spending hundreds on catering divide it up to each "grade level" to spend as they need! Celebrate success by providing more classroom items needed to promote engagement and learning.</p> |

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| C - e-mail - 3/23/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions Through my entire life I have been drawn to the arts. Through the years I have grown in my talent with the full support of my family. I plan to involve the arts in my life career. However, now that I plan my highschool schedule, I cannot take a class due to the recent cut as a pathway. The pathway slot ensured an art class into my schedule when all others were full with required classes. I now cannot pursue my passion on a daily basis and receive needed instruction to help my talent grow. |
| S - e-mail - 3/27/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions As an eighth grade student who will be transitioning over to the high school completely next year, I have seen first-hand the effects of budget cuts on the arts on students, and it isn't good. With the recent cut of studying arts as a major, many, many students are not happy with the mandatory career path. Many of my friends wish to be in art classes, but instead are forced to take classes that may not help in their career at all. Also, what will happen to the high school students currently majoring in art? Will they be forced to not qualify for an art career or college because the school takes away their major? I've seen many of the students hurt by this decision, as you are taking away many students' outlets for emotion and creativity, not to mention taking classes that many find to be the only they can enjoy with this stunt of yours. Are you really so ready to turn a blind eye to so many students' mentalities and futures? Are you really going to cut out such students for multiple agriculture paths? Just because the arts aren't physical labor or mass production doesn't mean they shouldn't be considered jobs. You have the classes, so why not make use of them for a change? I do hope you reconsider your options before hurting half the students at Taylor County schools. |
| T - e-mail - 3/28/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I have been an educator in Kentucky for 20 years now. For 16 of those, I have been a counselor. Part of my duties has often been administering standardized tests, disaggregating data, and analyzing and interpreting data, especially in explaining test results to parents. That being the case, it is beyond any logic that I recognize why we keep trying to re-invent the wheel. There are tests (achievement mainly) that have been around for years and years, have their validity proven, and are cost effective. Why do we keep trying to invent something that already exists???? If we want to go deeper, then accompany those with performance events. If you want students to demonstrate mastery of a subject that is easily demonstrable, then HAVE THEM DEMONSTRATE! Want kids to prove they understand how to add/subtract/multiply/divide? Have them balance a ledger or checking account. Please, please, PLEASE quit spending untold millions on tests that mean LESS THAN NOTHING outside the boundaries of Kentucky. If we want our kids to be global citizens, test them on broader, recognized scales such as the SAT, ACT, IOWA, CTBS... Any number of tests that have years of validity. It's almost impossible to explain all the changes to parents, much less justify them. I'm just about out of white-wash... |
| C - e-mail - 3/28/16 | What do you expect from our schools? The current accountability system is too complicated and has so many different designations that it appears almost everyone can claim they are doing a great job or should be celebrated for something or other through the system. If the system were simpler, the truth about student learning would be more readily apparent. |
| same | What school characteristics are most important? I think it's very important that an accountability system should not allow schools/districts to be labeled as proficient or distinguished unless they are making significant, measurable improvement in the achievement levels of each demographic grouping of students who have been traditionally under served. |
| same | How should we measure school success? The new system should get rid of the "gap kid" language. It is both demeaning and meaningless and it allows the masking of low scores by some groups of kids. It also sends a message to the uninitiated that this is a smallish group of students when in fact the kids in the designated "gap group" comprise over 50% of all our students. They are not the exception; they are the reality of our schools! |
| same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? If possible, please try not to further narrow the curriculum as a by-product of the accountability system. |
| same | How should we celebrate school success? Please fight as hard as you can against any changes in either legislation or board policy that would compare districts and/or schools with those of similar demographics as a part of an accountability system. The KY Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that "common schools shall provide EQUAL educational opportunities to all KY children regardless of their place of residence or economic circumstance." This would appear to require standards that are uniform -- and which 25 years of experience have taught us should be high! |
| SA - e-mail - 3/28/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I appreciate the fact that the Town Hall meetings have been established and that we have a leader in KY that is listening. If I had actually prepared something to speak about tonight, I would have gone further to say that our teachers in our District work hard and ALL of them want what is best for students to be successful. They are drastically underpaid for the time that they put in and the pressures that they feel to perform. They deserve far more than to be measured by their student's success (or lack of success) on standardized assessment like the ACT. We DO need to give our teachers and our schools more latitude to teach our students the skills they need to become adults (Finance, interest, loans, credit scores, etc.). |

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| T - e-mail - 3/30/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions Unfortunately I was unable to attend the town hall last night. However, I do have some talking points. As far as the accountability model is concerned, I think the program review is a cumbersome and monotonous waste of time. We are already doing things to promote the arts in our classrooms on a daily basis. Here at South Hancock, we have a wonderful music teacher that does a Christmas and Spring drama production every year. She has a choir group and teaches piano and violin lessons as well. We have a great art and P.E. teacher as well. We do things like GoNoodle in our classrooms, learn through song, and incorporate arts daily. Why should we have to document or prove that we are doing these things? For fear of being audited? Our time could be better spent planning, collaborating with teachers, or going to PD’s that we value and want to participate in. Adding the World Language Program Review is just another thing to add to our already huge to do list. I also don’t understand why there is a Writing Program Review when 5th grade is tested over writing. We need more money for professional developments and teachers should get a say in what they want PD in. Also, when the state hasn’t released new on-demand writing prompts or exemplary’s in years, how do we have anything to go on? The rubrics for state testing are way too general. And sometimes the questions on the KPREP are not even standard based, which is ridiculous! The shift needs to go away from too much testing, to more focus on individual students and how we can help them. Our students are given the MAP test three times a year in Math, Reading, and Language Arts. Plus they have a KPREP scrimmage, actual KPREP, and weekly tests! It’s too much for these fifth graders' brains. By the time testing rolls around, they are getting close to being maxed out. Especially when the last thing they are tested over is writing. I like the way the Social Studies standards are now, so why should they change? The sad thing is, different grade levels aren’t teaching all subjects, because we are so heavily tested. In fifth grade, we barely teach any science at all because we are tested over reading, math, writing, history, government, and economics. If there is anything to change about Social Studies, it should not span America from the beginning to present day. It should be more focused on a shorter amount of time. |
| SB - e-mail - 3/30/16 | What do you expect from our schools? Post secondary and "life" ready students, Create future ready leaders to help define our local community, Partner with families and organizations to create good citizens, health, and wellness. |
| same | What school characteristics are most important? (We just met with community members to revamp our mission/values/goals...these are the words they used) Innovative, United, Leadership, Inspiring, Proud, Empowered |
| same | How should we measure success? in the classroom and courses : using at least 3 different methods of assessment, schools/students: Academically, real life problem solving skills, attendance (can't work or go onto secondary school if you don't show up!) |
| same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? These next 2 I read to you , but here they are in writing... How do ensure all schools are successful? Don't make us "cookie cut-outs".The plan can't be the same for every school . we are not all the same and our kids are not all alike. Customize the success plans and define what "success" means at each distinct. |
| same | How should we celebrate success? By paying it forward! One of our schools considers their work successful because other schools (and in other states) ask for their advise. They are asked to teach their skills and plans every year at Model Schools Conference. We have plenty of schools in Ky that can learn from each other. |
| C - e-mail - 3/30/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I will be in attendance tomorrow night in Hazard and I'm hoping to speak. In the meantime, I may reference this document I created for the Colorado Education Initiative targeted at education leaders (administrators) that puts the focus on what they are held accountable for: test scores, attendance and graduation rates and how if we do not address the health needs of our students, we won’t be able to address those 3 listed. It really talks to education about how important it is to address the biggest barriers of learning- and how addressing them will help raise test scores, attendance and graduation rates. And, overall, how embedding school health and the WSCC model (Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child) into accountability measures will benefit all. (Attached reports to e-mail not included here.) |
| C - e-mail - 3/30/16 | Miscellaneous Comments, Questions I so enjoyed the education town hall meeting at Campbellsville University. I am also very concerned about the future of education in Kentucky. I speak as an educator and a parent of four children currently enrolled in public schools in Kentucky. We need to see more accountability in schools for : the arts- including drama, visual arts, music and dance, Physical education, we should not be ranked 50th for PE requirements in high school and what a disgrace that we do not even require a wellness policy in middle school. We have middle school students who only move when the walk through the hall to their next period for the entire school day for the entire year. We need kindergartens doing hands-on projects instead of bringing home 12 worksheets a day and taking tests on computer. |
| P - e-mail - 3/30/16 | What do you expect from our schools? One of your questions was, “What do we expect of our schools?” As a parent, I expect our schools to teach my children what they need to know in order to become productive and contributing members of our society. I expect them to be taught all subjects in all grades (currently their elementary school does not teach social studies in 4th grade or science in 5th grade because those subjects are not tested at those grade levels). I'd also like to see us move back towards a kindergarten program that was centered around “learning through play.” Five-year olds should be learning how to share and take turns, how to win and how to lose, how to be curious and love learning; not how to sit still in a chair for hours on end and do paperwork. They should be working on gross motor skills as much as, if not more than, fine motor skills. And they need some down time in the afternoon. If not a designated ‘nap time’, they at least need more than 5 minutes of ‘put your head on your desk while the teacher checks e-mail’. I'd like to see elementary schools that let kids be kids! |

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| Same | How should we measure school success? You asked how we (as educators) best let THE STUDENTS know how they are doing. I think the best type of test to use is a norm-referenced test as opposed to a criterion-referenced test that is currently in place. A test that shows a student and a parent and a teacher where a child is compared to his or her peers with a percentile score is more telling than a test that says a student is “distinguished” or “proficient” or “novice”. Really, what does that tell us? |
| Same | Miscellaneous Comments. We need to lessen the emphasis on testing. It sucks the fun out of school way too early (even in elementary school) and perpetuates the drop-out rate. My children’s elementary school had the whole campus take a scrimmage test; how does a kindergartener take a practice standardized test? Why? I'd rather my child spend that time at school being read to or playing with peers and learning social skills. I recently worked as an aide at an alternative high school; those students spent almost as much time testing and/or preparing for testing as they did being instructed in a classroom with a teacher. They prepared for and took the ACT, the Compass test, EOC exams, KPREP, the ASVAB, and the MAP test in addition to regular classroom tests and finals! I know testing is not going away, and I believe testing in and of itself isn’t bad, but the number of tests students are required to take and the emphasis placed on these tests is too much. |
| SA - e-mail - 4/4/16 | Miscellaneous Comments. I'm just following up with information for you to pass along to the commissioner regarding TPGES. When I am finally finished with mini and full observations, I will have conducted 64 of them from August - April. Each evaluation takes hours to complete, with full observations taking considerably more time than minis. Mini Observations this Year: pre-observation, observation, write the evaluation, post-observation conference = approximately 4 hours per evaluation. I completed 32. This equals to about 128 hours spent of my time. Full Observations this Year: pre-observation, observation, write the evaluation, post-observation conference = approximately 6 hours per evaluation. I will have completed 35. This equals to about 210 hours spent of my time. Summatives this Year: gather data, write the summative, summative conference = approximately 2.5 hours. I will complete 24 of these. This equals to about 60 hours spent of my time. This is a total time spent of 398 hours on evaluations. This does not include the time for meeting with every individual certified staff member to assist in development of their professional growth plans, reflections, and student growth goals. An estimation of the time spent for these would be 2 hours per person for 34 people. This would be a total time spent of 68 hours. A grand total estimation of time I have spent on TPGES this school year alone by the end of the school year (not including PPGES) is 466 hours. That is nearly 67 school days if that was all I did the entire day on those days. I obviously spent a lot of time at home working on these in order to meet the needs of my students, staff, and families - but it significantly impacted the amount of time I was available for them overall. |
| SA - e-mail - 4/4/16 | Miscellaneous Comments. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak about issues impacting our public schools. I particularly was impressed by the opportunity you allowed students to speak and the serious responses you provided. After I sat back down, I realized I hadn't touched on a couple of specific issues which I believe could be capitalized on to improve the education atmosphere, community involvement, and offset budget restrictions. First: The most promising program I have seen in eight years of looking at the issues around education for tying it back into the community is "The Work Ready Community" initiative. It is the only program I have seen which specifically ties education and jobs and community improvement together. Their vision seems to be the strongest (of the ones I've examined) and they have a strategic plan that is in the communities. Second: Kentucky's confusing and conflicting taxing laws are bringing hundreds of thousands of dollars into counties for special interests which could be tied to education, but aren't. I am only familiar with Lee County, but the issues seem to be consistent across the region of Eastern Kentucky in the smaller, poorer counties. Library Boards raise millions of dollars to build new, buildings instead of partnering with schools to increase program offerings and hours of operation. Farm Extension Offices do the same thing. Instead of increasing opportunities and helping fund agricultural, leadership, community development, and arts programs, which are all part of their charter, they build buildings. I believe the health departments are equally enamored with the "edifice complex", because in Lee County, they have increased their size by 200% in the last couple of years. And, except for a small cash reward, the Soil Conservation District authority does nothing for education. Strong leadership pointing out the loss of revenue for education and creating community involvement at the your level would go a long way toward correcting these deficiencies at the volunteer, local level. |
| T - e-mail - 4/4/16 | How should we measure school success? I have had the opportunity of working on benchmarking committees in developing the alternate assessment system. I do strongly feel that all children can learn and every child can succeed but I maintain it must be on their individualized levels. Students are not alike; they achieve through different avenues. |
| Same | Miscellaneous Comments. I am a high school special education teacher with 20+ years working beside students with moderate and severe disabilities. I would like to see accountability for this group of students to become more student centered with the focus for their individual goals of achievement. As you well know, the current system measures students with moderate and severe disabilities with the same core content standards as their same age, regular education peers. In my opinion, this is not meaningful to low-incidence students. Last night's Town Hall was such a well-attended and enjoyable event! I am certainly glad that it was held in our area and pleasantly satisfied that I attended. It seems that we are moving toward a better focus on students, as the Commissioner stated last evening. This is a step in a more positive direction. I am excited to see what the future holds for our children in this great Commonwealth. Thank you for valuing the voices of your Kentucky educators. I sincerely appreciate your taking the time to read my comments. |
| SA - e-mail - 4/4/16 | Miscellaneous Comments. I'm just following up with information for you to pass along to the commissioner regarding TPGES. When I am finally finished with mini and full observations, I will have conducted 64 of them from August - April. Each evaluation takes hours to complete, with full observations taking considerably more time than minis. Mini Observations this Year: pre-observation, observation, write the evaluation, post-observation conference = approximately 4 hours per evaluation. I completed 32. This equals to about 128 hours spent of my time. Full Observations this Year: pre-observation, observation, write the evaluation, post-observation conference = approximately 6 hours per evaluation. I will have completed 35. This equals to about 210 hours spent of my time. Summatives this Year: gather data, write the summative, summative conference = approximately 2.5 hours. I will complete 24 of these. This equals to about 60 hours spent of my time. This is a total time spent of 398 hours on evaluations. This does not include the time for meeting with every individual certified staff member to assist in development of their professional growth plans, reflections, and student growth goals. An estimation of the time spent for these would be 2 hours per person for 34 people. This would be a total time spent of 68 hours. A grand total estimation of time I have spent on TPGES this school year alone by the end of the school year (not including PPGES) is 466 hours. That is nearly 67 school days if that was all I did the entire day on those days. I obviously spent a lot of time at home working on these in order to meet the needs of my students, staff, and families - but it significantly impacted the amount of time I was available for them overall. |

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| SA - e-mail - 4/6/16 | Miscellaneous Comments. My fear is that we are playing a cat and mouse game. EXAMPLE; High schools are playing the CCR game with testing. If a high schools replies that they do not do this they are not being truthful. I want my students at the high school level to be educated, truly educated in life long skills. Be productive citizens and be ready to work, go to school or join the military. Use these years as exploratory in their field of interests. Right now we test. Test. Test. Retest to meet that benchmark. Hours and days are wasted. Yes there needs to be accountability, but not in this way. We are educating students to know how to take a test. Students slip through the cracks at the early stages of education because we are testing test test. Not life skills, life lessons, ethics, hard work, drug free citizens. TEST. All we do. Real life. Real world. Real teaching. What happened to it? Accountability, yes we must have standards, test the students, next year the same test different age scoring guide, and repeat. What do they know? We always fly the plane while we are building it. We set ourselves and students up for failure. An example, in March our high school received AMO just this week changed it again because of ESSA. It has not been a month. |
| Student - e-mail - 4/7/16 | Miscellaneous Comments. Due to the decision to cancel the art career pathways you have stopped me from pursuing my passion. You enforce us to take needed classes while allowing us time to take classes that we enjoy. However with that new decision you've taken that away as well. By cutting the art career pathways you have cut my dream. You have made it to where I and many like me are not eligible to take the classes that will help us pursue what we enjoy most in life. Without the art career pathways I no longer can enjoy and pursue the arts. Now that you have cut these options there is no room in the daily schedule for so many students to take art classes. With the needed classes that you require you have cut any option for me to take an art class. With your recent decision you have made it impossible for me to take the classes I've dreamed of for years. I now can not get needed instruction to help my talent and passion. You decided to cancel the arts career pathway classes which would give me needed instruction. But only the arts were harmed. Every other pathway have all the classes they need. So now kids have all the help they will need, that is except for the kids like me. |
| T - e-mail - 4/8/16 | What do I expect from our schools in terms of arts education? I expect schools to not merely help students to become college and career ready, but also LIFE ready; and that includes providing meaningful learning in the arts. Learning ABOUT the arts is not the same thing as learning to DO an art. So I want schools to build literacy in the arts: teach children how to sing, read music, play an instrument, draw, sculpt, act, build sets, and dance. At the elementary school this should be an introductory exploration of all of the art forms, and the middle school students should go deeper in understanding and begin to focus on the art form that particularly holds their individual interest; and at the high school, each student should have the opportunity to really dig into one or more arts forms that provides his or her best avenues for artistic expression. Courses at the high school level should be available in all four art forms. They should be varied and multi-leveled in order to help students gain the strength of artistic skills necessary for a lifetime of using the arts to express themselves and more fully appreciating the artistic expressions of others. I direct the Immanuel Baptist Church Orchestra in Lexington. We have about thirty members from the ages of 15-95. Some of those members are students, doctors, teachers, builders, engineers, computer programmers and operators, etc. They use their school preparation in music to enrich their lives and the lives of others on a weekly basis. I don't know of many single subjects in school that are as useful in continually enriching and balancing lives as music. In a technological age that has the potential to be very dehumanizing, our children need to build a capacity in understanding and communicating in the arts that will last a lifetime. I want to be very clear. There are a host of validated studies confirming that the study of the arts in school has dramatic impact on reducing drop out rate, closing the gap, raising math and language arts scores, developing empathy, improving the areas critical to 21st century skills, increasing the level of education attainment, and the list goes on and on. The good news is that those are all added benefits, and positive by-products; but kids need to DO THE ARTS because it's what helps them express themselves as human beings in ways that no other subject can. Nothing, no matter how we couch it with artistic terms is a substitute for learning music, visual art, theater art, or dance; and by doing so, learning to appreciating the artistic expression of others. Moreover, I expect schools to be places where students engage in life, where there is intellectual inquiry, amazement, joy, wonder; and where kids feel like what they do matters. I certainly agree that at the end of a child's public education he/she should be college and career ready. However, I am concerned that the current industrial and business influence on education is, whether intended or not, encouraging schools to be so narrowly focused on preparing students for a future careers and building capacity in the workforce that it is robbing our children of the unique, but short-lived opportunity to explore their world as children and adolescents. From my perspective, that's a cheapened view the power of schooling and of what it means to be an educated person. Moreover, it is just an abominable approach to ensuring our children can live happy, well-balanced, meaningful lives. In the eyes of a child, school is NOT a preparation for life—it IS life; and the school experience should emulate a balanced life. It should contain a balanced curriculum that supports literacy in all ways of knowing and communicating and that includes singing, and dancing, and drawing, and acting. Finally, I expect schools to practice equity. I expect them to value and respect a child's artistic gifts and professional life goals as an artist as much as they value the child who wishes to become a manufacturer, a scientist or a banker. Society has many parts that contribute to the whole, and schools should be about helping a young person find his or her best suite and passion for a life career—not about filling current industrial quotas. The Kentucky Department of Education identifies a career ready student as one who is ready to take the next step toward career preparation—whether that involves college or entry into the workforce. If schools are going to require all thirteen year olds to declare a career path, then career paths should be made available in all career areas. It is a matter of equity. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Research has confirmed that the single most important factor in student success is a highly effective teacher. You would not assign a teacher ignorant of French to teach a French class. But currently we are certifying and delegating many non-arts teachers to teach the arts disciplines in our elementary, middle and high schools. These teachers are, I am sure, fine teachers, and they can teach students ABOUT the arts---but only someone who has DONE the arts can teach another how to DO the arts. Since SB1 in 2009, Fayette County has lost eight percent of their arts specialist teachers at the elementary level. Sixty-four percent of the teachers teaching the History and Appreciation of the Visual and Performing Arts in the high schools of Fayette County have no artistic background and no teacher training in the arts. In Jefferson County, over half of the elementary schools do not have arts specialist teachers while others have world class arts specialists teachers. Certifications must be revised and standards must be in place for those teaching the arts discipline. That is not the same as using the arts to enhance learning and engage students in other subjects. Those are legitimate uses OF the arts, but that is not study IN the arts. In music, that means learning to sing, play an instrument, construe artistic meaning from a symphony or a bluegrass tune, compose, improvise, etc. The lists are similar for the other arts. That kind of study requires time set aside to specifically learn the skills and concepts of each art discipline. That kind of study builds capacity for a lifetime of inquiry, consumption, and participation in the arts. Regulations must be put in place that has some minimum time requirement for arts disciplines study on a weekly basis. Schools need to provide the appropriate spaces for arts study. Art rooms with ample room for drawing, sculpting. Spaces for dance and theater, and safe rehearsal rooms for music. Schools should provide non-perishable equipment, instruments, texts, music that enable teachers to maximize learning. Schools should be accountable for showing they are budgeting for learning in the arts. |

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| Same | <p>How should we measure school success? Further, as long as there is high stakes assessment and accountability, where schools are ranked against each other, the focus will always be on validating adult competency rather than helping children succeed. Gaming the systems becomes an important factor. Children end up paying the price. They lose their art teacher so a school can hire a reading teacher to boost reading scores. They lose time in their arts classes, because they are pulled to do extra remediation to boost math scores. Students are counseled into career pathways that may or may not be in their best interests and are cut out of elective possibilities that include music, theater, dance, and visual arts as schools are incentivized to do so through the potential of extra accountability points. School decisions should be focused on the success and well being of children—not adults. School effectiveness should be measured against a standard of proficiency, and if all Kentucky Schools meet the standard, they should all be duly identified as such. Ranking schools, using cut scores is as inaccurate a measure of school success as grading a classroom of Rhodes scholars by the bell curve method. Let’s set a standard of expectation, and if all schools in the Commonwealth meet it, then they all should be considered proficient. Set a benchmark for needing improvement, and those who fall below get extra help. We need to take the gaming out of accountability. We need to use assessment to help us, help students improve. Arts program accountability must remain a part of school accountability. However, the program review process must be made simpler. Kentucky has spent thousands of dollars and millions of manpower hours sifting through program reviews, and because they are self reporting, self assessing, have no solid benchmark standards of expectation, the state has not one shred of evidence (data) to should that opportunities to learn have declined or increased since program review implementation. Program reviews are long-standing, valid ways of evaluating programs and improving program quality as long as clear standards of expectations are established, there is a genuine desire to improve program quality through administrative support of the review, and if there are competent evaluators involved in the process. In less enlightened circumstances, it is an exercise in validating the status quo and gaming the system. Create a system of reporting that identifies clear, specific opportunity to learn standards in each art form and have schools report whether they meet, lacking, or exceed that standard. Data is not always an indicator of quality, but data can include some powerful opportunities to learn indicators that are inherent in proficient programs. That data might include the number of credentialed arts specialists staff, course offerings, time allocated for discipline-specific arts study, resources allocated for instructional equipment and materials, and a checklist of appropriate facility characteristics. This will require the state developing a framework of specific expectation for arts programs. A data driven report is much easier to monitor and validate, and will reap comparative data that can inform a statewide understanding of progress in arts education across the Commonwealth.</p> |
| Same | <p>How Do we ensure all schools are successful? First, fix the unqualified teacher permissions for teaching the arts and protect time for teaching artistic skills and concepts. Time on task and a truly qualified teacher will solve most of our arts deficiency problems. Second, establish a “gold standard” for arts education programs so that everyone knows where “there” is. Provide some real guidance on how to get “there,” by identifying great models across the state where programs emulate that standard and have implemented innovative ways of achieving it. Identify schools that fit into similar demographics and facilitate the sharing of ideas and strategies that worked for “gold standard arts schools” in those demographic groups. The KDE staff should serve as a resource for helping schools find grants, resources, and professional training in the arts. Set aside a state “grant money pool” each year for schools who would like to apply for financial assistance to implement new arts offerings, innovative arts strategies, etc.</p> |
| Same | <p>How should we celebrate school success? Kentucky has specific learning goals that set a minimum expectation—that schools develop all students’ artistic skills and capacities. Anything less than this, is below expectation. There has been some discussion of emphasizing the importance of the arts by giving awards to schools that for instance have 80% of their students involved in the arts. On reflection, I think this diminishes the fact that the arts are identified as core subjects in the curriculum. In my view, that is recognizing schools for performing below the minimum expectation to develop students’ talents and interests in the arts. First, establish that gold standard for arts education based on national opportunity to learn standards and identify those schools that meet that standard. Identify schools that are doing creative and innovative things with their arts programs. Spotlight student achievement in the arts through publicizing the student achievements of those selected for the Governors School for the Arts. Publicize school and student arts achievements in state arts education associations’ student events (all-state groups, statewide assessments, and other achievements), gather and disseminate data on arts scholarships in Kentucky. Use “gold standard” programs as models-and highlight them in KDE publications. Upscale the KDE webpage for the arts to promote these kinds of truly meaningful achievements. Ensure, through regulation, that arts program data is required as part of the school report card. Such data might include: staffing credentials and the number of arts staff, course offerings, resource allocation, time allocations, facilities, after school enrichment activities, and arts program and student achievements.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/8/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments. Thank you again to you and your team for a great town hall meeting. I would like to again express my concern for the lack of diversity of those that attended last night. If I can help take the questions to the individual you are trying to reach I would be happy to serve. I also would like to share my 2 cents worth about Kentucky schools. I love Fayette County Public School and our new superintendent, Emmanuel Caulk, is a breath of fresh air. I think we need to look at how to better support out wrap around services. The state is moving to do more with college and career readiness. But how will are children get there if they are not ready for kindergarten. Let’s not set our children up to fail before they have even started. I have already spoke to Manny about some possible ideas for our per-k families. I look forward to great things.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/8/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments. On behalf of all Kentuckians I would like to extend gratitude to Commissioner Pruitt for these Town Hall Meetings to hear from stakeholders about defining successful schools in the Commonwealth. I believe this effort to gather input from stakeholders will provide the Kentucky Department of Education with a wealth of feedback on which to design the next schools success model. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires us to reconsider all that we have been doing in education for a good number of years. Alignment with this new law is imperative as the state considers a new design for accountability</p> |
| Same | <p>What do you expect from our schools? • A well-rounded education that is inclusive of all traditional core subjects which includes the visual and performing arts. Like other core subjects, the visual and performing arts instructional programs should be discipline-specific, not simply integrated into other contents. • All instruction, including the visual and performing arts, should be provided by highly-qualified content specialists with teaching credentials specific to the discipline being taught. • An education for all students that centers on accommodating for individual needs, and provides student access to all instructional programs. • High quality curriculum and instruction built on research-based standards. • Schools that effectively use all resources, staffing, and best-practice strategies to ensure that each student is working up to, and achieving, his or her potential. • Schools that involve the community and are inviting to those traditionally outside the walls of the school building.</p> |

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| Same | What school characteristics are most important? • A clear vision for student success in all areas, including the visual and performing arts, and an action plan with clear goals to achieve student success. Woven into that plan should be: • A student-centered environment. • Community involvement. • Teamwork and collaboration among school leadership and staff on behalf of achieving individual student success. • An open and positive environment. • Love for students and the educational process. • Utilization of ongoing reflection and review processes in order to improve instruction and instructional programs. An eye on continuous improvement. • A clear plan for professional learning which leads to best-practice teaching behaviors and content expertise. |
| Same | How should we measure school success? • Classroom based assessment of student progress, quality curriculum based on standards, and instruction. De-emphasize standardized assessments in the accountability system. Consider alternatives such as classroom based performance tasks and stealth assessments. Measure the adequacy of opportunities to learn provided by the school (as defined by educators with specific expertise in the content and processes of each subject area). Measure how well administration and leadership supports instructional programs and facilitates the improvement of teacher effectiveness. This is a key component to school success. Measure student successes within individual capabilities and potential at the school level. Traveling from point A to point B is a different journey for each and every child. School success should be based on individual student progress. Accountability percentages tend to encourage administrators toward allocating more funding and support where there is the most return in accountability points. In Kentucky we have witnessed points and percentages taking priority over individual student growth. Create an accountability system that will minimize or eliminate the “chasing points” game. Keep adults accountable and measure student progress in all core areas including the visual and performing arts. Don’t let important learning drop off the table and don’t allow students be victims of accountability. Keep the arts as part of the accountability model and program reviews are a good way to accomplish that. (Program quality reviews have been used in the United Kingdom since the 19th century. Perhaps we should take a look at what they are doing.) |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? • Schools classified as unsuccessful should get assistance from KDE in identifying turn-around teams that partner with schools to develop and implement improvement plans. Consider removing the authority of SBDM councils in unsuccessful schools until turn-around is achieved. Collect models of success to share across the state, and employ successful schools as mentors for struggling schools. Work to create a culture of success by supporting schools and avoiding penalizing them. Use site visitations (e.g., program review audits) to work with schools in the improvement of instructional programs. Getting assistance into schools in a partnership format goes a long way. Team with state education associations to develop a reservoir of trained auditors. Provide for outstanding teachers by nurturing new teachers and placing high emphasis on effective research based professional learning. |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? • School success centers on student success. Celebrate student successes first. There are thousands of opportunities to do so every day. Every student can be successful in his or her own light. Provide equal recognition for student success whether it be athletic, artistic, or academic. Provide recognition that makes it “cool” to achieve at a high level. Using main stream publicity, celebrate schools that develop instructional programs which enable students to achieve at high levels and which provide high quality opportunities to learn. Include multiple measures of success on the school report card—including instructional program quality and success, along with student improvement and achievement. |
| C - e-mail - 4/12/16 | What do you expect from our schools? I expect the highest quality of education for ALL students. Reaching this high level of education has as much to do with the relationship built between teacher and students, the interest the students have in school, and the desire to learn, as it does to the curriculum being taught. I expect that students move on to the next grade level with confidence and the knowledge needed to be successful at that grade level in all subject areas. I would want students to find an area(s) of success to build confidence and interest in their school, which will result in a desire to learn and higher level of learning accomplished! |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Focus on each student as an individual- their learning styles, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Teacher/ staff support from all; the more confidence and desire the teacher has will reflect completely on the students' learning. An improvement plan that all staff take part in creating and delivering. Most importantly, a love for their school, their students, and the success within the school and students that attend there! |
| Same | How should we measure school success? There should not be as much focus on standardized testing. I understand there needs to be data collected and ways to compare, but the numerous standardized tests that are required and the amount of time that is consumed by teachers and students is taking away from the other areas that are just as important. I would think the schools do need to be compared on a generalized, consistent rubric that is the same across the board, but I don't believe standardized testing is the best method for this. |

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| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? I believe attendance, meeting the curriculum requirements, and class sizes all need to be considered for school success. One major issue my school faces is that we do not have the funds to have enough staffing to keep the class sizes small enough to meet the needs of each student and control behavioral issues to be able to teach to the entire class. Attendance is also a concern because the students that are missing school it is taking a toll on their academics. My school is doing incentives and things to try and boost the student attendance and the district is cracking down on attendance as well to help this aspect. |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? Publicity for the school is a great way to spread positive news and celebration. My school does a lot to celebrate the students' success with inflatables, popcorn and a movie, and different rewards, but there is not much focus on celebrating the teachers, which I believe is just as important as well! |
| C - e-mail - 4/13/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I received an invitation to give feedback about our public school system. I feel qualified to do this as after five years in public school, I took my son out this year and put him in a private Catholic school for 5th grade. We plan to put him back into public school for middle school and high school. I was given 4 criteria to answer this invitation. |
| Same | What do you expect from public school? I expect a safe, clean environment that facilitates learning. I expect qualified teachers. Both my grandmother and mother taught their entire careers in our public schools. Our son's public school experience has been full of highs and lows with teachers. Our son seems to have a good year or a bad year based on his teacher. I do my best to teach him that no matter who the teacher is, you must take the initiative to do your best. |
| Same | What characteristic is most important? I would say three. Reading, writing and arithmetic. I have a very successful career. In it, I use these three fundamental knowledge characteristics daily. I have a great interest in science, history, art and music but these three are where the rubber meets the road in my life. |
| Same | How should success be measured. Certainly not by standardized tests! Report cards measure true success each 9 weeks. It works! Simplify it! |
| Same | How would you ensure success? More continuing education for teachers as well as performance evaluations for all teachers. For tenured teachers, there should be a plan that if they do not comply in a period of time, they should lose their tenure. We all have to perform for it to work. |
| Same | How do you celebrate success? Again, we already have it. Honor Roll, National Honor Society, Society of Distinguished American High School Students and eventually scholarships to college or trade school. Simplification is needed in many areas of our society. Schools are one of them! |
| C - e-mail - 4/13/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: High school deaf children needs a bilingual teacher. They hired hearing English teacher does not know bilingual and they provide hearing teacher an interpreter. But interpreter doesn't teach bilingual to the deaf students. The interpreter tells the student what the English teacher say to them, not bilingual. The students are struggling to understand English. Please hire qualify bilingual teacher with deaf education now. |
| P - e-mail - 4/15/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: This email is in response to the Town Hall initiative. All of the questions that were posed about school success come down to one issue for me: testing. I am the parent of a fifth grade student (female) here in Jessamine County. My daughter is very bright, and reads at a grade level far beyond her current grade. For the most part, she likes school. There are the typical social issues with being a fifth grader, and she is pretty easy going. For the past several years, she has become more and more anxious as it approaches testing time (MAP and K-PREP). Anxious to the point of nausea and vomiting the night before, moodiness in the days prior, and tears the morning of. This has been exacerbated each year by the antics her teachers use to "bribe" the students to do their best. They are threatened with extra homework, placed in "intervention classes," etc. if they do not meet their MAP goals. This year as a group, my daughter's entire grade was told by a teacher that they would not be able to attend their end of year bash if not they did not score at a certain level or meet their goals. While I understand that every child may not have issues with testing anxiety, the bulk of the methods used by teachers to try to "encourage" the students to do their best border on what I consider as bullying, or intimidation. The students all know and talk among themselves, that whether it is admitted or not, the school and/or teachers are "punished" in various ways if test scores are low. In addition, administrators and teachers remind them that they scored at bottom in district, next to last, etc. These are elementary aged children. They should not bear the stress of this ridiculous testing system. And it is sad and disappointing to me that our children are testing so often, and under such circumstances. I know my daughter isn't the only one with this issue--her teachers have told me this year that MANY children experience this, and most are female. I have spoken with her teachers throughout the years and told them that my daughter has testing anxiety, and she has had teachers tell her to just ignore what they are told about not being able to do a certain activity, etc. and just try her best. This confuses her when she hears that said, but then continues to hear the same things being said year after year. As a parent, it is hard for me to explain this behavior to her, and even harder to see how much of a personality change she undergoes around testing time. While I know that there must be standards in place to measure school/district/student success, I strongly urge the KDEA to set guidelines on how students should be "encouraged" prior to test time(s), and my hope is that eventually, you will rethink the current position that such frequent testing is a way to judge school and student success. |
| P - e-mail - 4/15/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I would like to see it to where parents do not have to buy paper, pencils, books, folders--just the basic needs. Is there some way to get stores to donate items to schools? Or what if the high schools had graphic arts classes that could make flyers for a certain store, and in return that store donates school items? Flyers could be passed out locally. What about web design classes? Lots of small businesses do not have a website or facebook page, and in return they could donate school items? I work for Fayette Co Public Schools. I see the special needs kids struggling, I see their teachers frustrated. Is there some kind of curriculum you could make up that would help encourage kids to grow up wanting to work with special needs? There's all kinds of technical programs, but what about encouraging kids to be patient special ed teachers? Lots of kids are already tuning in to their electronics and tuning out the teachers. School needs to be fun and engaging, and I think for the older kids, they need to know there is a very big possibility that if they do not take school seriously, they may find themselves working at a restaraunt for minimum wage at the age of 40. Needs to be more programs that can be applied to the real world, like how to cure diseases and studying the earth, like pre college courses for middle school and high school. |

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| T - e-mail - 4/16/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I am an educator with 11 years of experience . I teach elementary students. I spend 20+ hours per week of my personal time to make sure my lessons are engaging, differentiated, rigorous, and effective. I make at least 100 parent calls/contacts throughout the year, usually on my own time. I make home visits, go to baseball games and birthday parties of my students. I build relationships and create in my kids a love of learning. Please try to understand and consider that my time is FINITE. For every single paper, form, report, documentation, graph, assessment data, analysis, referral, etc. that I am required to complete, takes time away from my students; from teaching. A colleague told me just today that she has spent 3 nights at home and 3 planning periods just to compile the documentation required for PGES. It's not even a "summative year" for this teacher. The self-reflective aspect of PGES is laughable. I reflect every day, all day long. You have to in order to be an effective educator. I'm all for holding people accountable for their job performance. I really am. But there has to be a better way. Honestly, I'm not convinced at all that legislators or the KDE, truly understand the time constraints on teachers or what it takes to educate a population of students that are disadvantaged when there is no help. No assistants. No aids. No interventionists. No support. Gone are the days of authentic learning for our students. More scripts, more documentation, more regulations, more politics and less support - a detrimental cocktail for our students. When does it end? Teaching is not just a "science;" it's also an "art;" both of which take time, skill, creativity, support, AND LESS PAPERWORK. When putting together your steering committee, I would highly recommend you seek the counsel of teachers who are helping their kids to "make a name for themselves" instead of ladder-climbing teachers touting their own name. I would submit that whoever approved PGES was exactly that type. |
| T - e-mail - 4/16/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Those of you who are challenged with the responsibility of developing Kentucky's new accountability system have my support and commiserations. The results will likely not please everyone. Outcomes of change rarely do; I am sure you will all work to create the best results possible. You are possible already aware that the present system is unfair because it punishes those of us who are given the chance to work with students whose top needs do not include an education that only teaches to the test. When developing our new accountability system please consider the following: Teachers who are entrusted with those students who do not want to be at school, those who are struggling with any number of life's challenges, those with special needs, the behavior challenged, and school resistant students have an obligation to give those students so much more than just an academic education. Those students might not have data outcomes that improve at the same pace as those who have a life with all those essentials and supports that many of us take for granted. On the other hand, teachers who take high achieving students who already score high may not have data outcomes that improve as much as others either. Examples of reference: Those fragile students who need you to earn their trust and show them love and support may not score well, but if you have earned their trust and shown them that they can rely on you, that is so much more important than how they score on a test. I often have students who are removed from home due to unimaginable abuse. Those students need so much more than an education; it is so much more important to show those students that you support them and that they can trust you with their monsters. If a student who has never attempted to score well actually takes even a portion of assessment with seriousness, he may still score low. The success there is getting the student to be willing to try at all. If a student already scores high, improvement is very challenging because they are already at the top of the test. Questions become extremely challenging at that point. |
| SA - e-mail - 4/17/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: My name is Laura Benningfield and I am the principal at Taylor County High School. I had the opportunity to hear you speak at the CU town hall and I got to talk with you briefly at the Campbellsville/Taylor County Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for making yourself accessible and for giving the people of Kentucky an opportunity to meet you and learn more about you and your vision for education in this state. Many of the things that you shared struck a chord with me, and I am taking you up on your invitation to share my educational visions for Kentucky with you and your team. I am new to this principal business. I began teaching in 1991, and I spent the next 20+ years in the classroom teaching English and math (and anything else that needed taught, sponsored, or coached). I left the classroom to serve as one of the first college and career counselors in Kentucky. I have also had a chance to represent our state at a national level at various symposiums and conferences in the areas of CTE, personalized learning, and non-traditional instructional days. So, it is from the trenches that I would like to share with you my experiences with college and career readiness, school accountability, and teacher accountability in the state of Kentucky. College and Career Readiness A. One of the best things that Kentucky has done in education in the past 25 years has been the focus it has placed on college and career readiness. What is working: College and Career Readiness is RELEVANT. Students want to do well on the ACT. They want to hit their college benchmarks. It matters to them. Students and parents value AP and Dual Credit courses. Students and parents also see the value of career readiness – especially when industry certifications are involved. They really do not care about the KOSSA tests because there are few benefits for students for passing the KOSSA test. Some areas may have articulation agreements with certain schools, but this does not affect the majority. College Readiness is not a one shot deal. Every student is given the opportunity to take the ACT multiple times and then given access to other options to reach college readiness (COMPASS, KYOTE). Students are also given multiple opportunities to reach benchmark levels on the WORKKEYS tests, ASVAB, and many industry certs. The state picks up the costs for most of these tests. This helps to level the playing field for schools no matter their size, location, or financial status. B. However, like all great educational ideas that have been tied to state-wide accountability measures, college and career readiness in Kentucky has become a competition and one that is easily manipulated by schools in ways that do not always benefit students. Too many educational decisions in the past 6 years have been made on how many points and ½ points can be earned and not how best to prepare our students for the expectations and rigor of college and the work force. |

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| | <p>Concerns and Road Blocks to College and Career Readiness College Readiness can't be all about the ACT. It has to be about a set of characteristics and skills that students need to be successful citizens in their communities and in today's global job market. CCR, as it is defined in Kentucky, still depends mostly on tests that do not take into account employability skills and work ethic. When the state added college and career readiness to accountability, it did not provide for equitable access for all students nor did it provide any funding for districts to hire CTE teachers or fund the establishment of more career tech and STEM programs. Some students have access to technology schools and community technical colleges right in their counties while others do not. Students in Taylor Co and Campbellsville have to travel to Green County for programs like welding and automotives (and give up half of their day to do that), while students from Green Co can just walk up the hill and take courses throughout their high school careers. Arts & Humanities: Students deserve the right to be recognized for career readiness in the fine arts. I was so excited when I heard that that students could earn career readiness by taking a rigorous pathway of courses in these areas then demonstrating their skills through a portfolio or performance. I fully support the decision to postpone these assessments because the state was just not ready to move forward. I respect that you made the decision not to push forward with a plan that was doomed to fail. I couldn't care less that we did not get to earn a point or a bonus for these students. But I am very sad for the students who did not get the opportunity to demonstrate their career readiness in these fields. CTE programs face many obstacles at the state and federal levels when it comes to establishing, funding, and maintaining career technical programs. The KOSSA test is antiquated. It does not measure the career readiness of a student. It measures the test taking skills of our students. As a state we must decide which we want to measure. Industry certifications that truly matter to our students are expensive. The state has done an outstanding job supporting the costs of the Microsoft specialists certifications through the IT Academy work at the state level. (Kudos to Laura Raganas for leading this work) However, while these certifications look great on a resume and will demonstrate computer proficiency to employers, this certification does not lead to a specific career field, like say a pharmacy tech certification does. C Proposals for moving forward in CCR We need to find a quality college readiness system since we no longer have the EXPLORE-PLAN-ACT-COMPASS system. If ACT refuses to negotiate with us on a more affordable and tailored system, then the secondary and post-secondary schools in Kentucky need to collaborate and create our own. ACT makes a lot of money off of Kentucky. We should leverage that power with ACT. We should also write ACT out of our legislation so that we have some negotiation power. Provide grants for the start up of new career technical programs within high school and middle schools. Provide state funding for industry certifications. Include art, music, drama, and dance in career readiness. Students who are planning on making a career in the military deserve to be recognized as career ready when they have scored well enough on the ASVAB to be accepted into one of the military branches and have attended or are attending basic training. Make it easier to be certified to teach CTE courses. For example, my biology teachers should be able to teach courses that "count" in CTE pathways in health and agriculture. Redefine what it means to be college ready and what it means to be career ready that encompasses more than tests. Then track students after they leave high schools to determine if our students are being successful at the next level. Let districts have flexibility on what it means to be career ready. For example, suppose you have a student who wants to be a lawyer. There is no industry certification or KOSSA test designed specifically for this pathway, so allow districts to individualize a career pathway, set goals specific for that student, and then determine if that student met the goals. This student's goal may include taking certain courses, job shadowing, earning the Work Ethic seal, completing a senior internship, and demonstrating their learning through a presentation of learning to a panel of community members, etc. Unbridled Learning Accountability System After listening to you, I am confident that you have a strong grasp of what is and is not working about our accountability system. I just wanted to weigh in on some of the specific concerns that I have with this system: We do not get feedback from most of these assessments. For example, all we get back from the EOCs is an arbitrary number that does not mean anything to anyone. I have yet to be able to figure out how these numbers are calculated, and I am a numbers person. The calculations are too complicated and there are too many data points. This system is trying to measure too many things in a superficial way. This system is open to manipulation – especially in the area of CCR.</p> |
| continued | <p>Our system does not measure true success. For the most part, it measures students' abilities to take tests. In addition, assigning a final "score" to schools and then ranking them against each other is a recipe for poor instructional decisions to be made at the district and school level. When a school chooses not to teach science at certain grade levels because it is not tested, you have no option but to point the finger at the system. Program Reviews are great. However, trying to attach a number to them for accountability purposes devalues the process and encourages schools to overinflate scores and to not accurately self assess. The only way to get better is to have the freedom to be brutally honest in your self assessment. PGES The Framework for Teaching sets a great foundation in helping administrators support teachers in becoming better. And that is what it's all about. Improving our craft to help students. This framework gives everyone around the state and in every school a common language and common set of expectations for teachers and other educational professionals. The framework is one of my most valued resources as a principal. What Kentucky did, though, was take a great thing and make it complicated and tedious. I am glad to see that the state has stepped backed on including PGES into the accountability for a school. When teacher evaluations are a part of accountability, it makes it difficult for principals to give accurate and meaningful feedback without it "hurting" scores. Also, CIITS is terrible. I do not say this lightly, but I just couldn't think of a more appropriate word. CIITS is full of kinks. It is tedious to use. It is expensive. They did not deliver the product we thought we were getting. Great in theory – terrible in execution. It really is just bad technology. I have spent hours on the phone with the CIITS help desk and rarely do I get the help I need. My teachers did not have the time to do this and quickly lost respect for anything involving CIITS. Compare this to Infinite Campus which is great in theory and is great technology. We never have issues with IC. And, from what I have researched, Infinite Campus now has the capability to do pretty much anything CIITS claims to be able to do. Proposal for PGES: Give this responsibility back to the districts. Let them continue to create district evaluation plans based on the Framework for Teaching. Have knowledgeable leaders at the state level provide support and oversight. And please do not make districts use CIITS. 2. Create a library of videos from actual classes that administrators, teacher leaders, and PLC teams can view, evaluate, and critique so that we can have more professional conversations about what quality instruction does and does not look like. It could be something similar to what is already made available in the training videos that administrators have to study in order to pass their certifications to evaluate teachers. Thank you for this opportunity to share my experiences and the lessons I have learned as an educator in Kentucky. I am proud of the work of this state, and I am proud of the work within my school. I think Kentucky is on the cusp of something that can be game changing, but it will take redefining what our students need to know and be able to do to be successful in today's global society. If there is any way that I can assist over the next couple of years as we remodel our educational system in this state, please do not hesitate to call on me. I would love to have the opportunity to participate in this process.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/17/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Any testing system should compare the students test scores to the individual student from year to year to determine growth. The areas that need to be tested are math, science , reading and social studies through the students sophomore year. If the student then chooses to take a vocational track they can be tested and compared with the vocational skill tests. They are preparing for the work force not college. If the students are going to college continue to use the math, science, reading and social studies testing system. This testing should not take over 3 days to compete. Make the data easy for everyone to understand. The results should be easy enough for the parents to read and readily understand. In addition, the schools should not have to spend days breaking the data down. It should already be completed when the scores come back. The current system is out of control. The info from the tests can be spun however anyone wants to spin it. It needs to be transparent and straight forward.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I am the Managing Attorney of the Children's Law Center in Lexington, Kentucky. I attended the town hall meeting in Fayette County on April 7, 2016. In the timeline posted, there was a reference to workgroups. As an organization focused on educational and criminal justice advocacy for kids, we would like to be involved in any way possible with the implementation of ESSA. We are hoping to expand our educational services into Eastern and Western Kentucky. Specifically, we would be interested in participating or leading a work group centered around the provisions in Part D of ESSA which provide additional protections and opportunities for those students in state care (whether in foster care or the juvenile justice system). This very vulnerable group of students stand to lose so much if they are not afforded additional protections while in state care. They have educational, housing, and mental health needs that are often more complex than traditional students in the public school system. Please let me know how we can help, or who I can speak with further about a work group for this population of students. Thank you in advance!</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Every business or profession in life stays "in business", or NOT, based on PERFORMANCE. Why should education be any different? Look at some of the private schools...do you think people would pay to send their kids there if they had similar track records as the public institutions?</p> |

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| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I am currently President of the Kentucky Library Association, but I also have an interest in K-12 education as an employee of a community college. I was planning on attending the town hall in Corbin, but my work schedule prohibits it. I believe you have already heard from James Allen at the first town hall, but I want to emphasize the importance of school librarians and libraries in regards to school success. I have to admit that my own experience with school libraries and librarians has provided me with the knowledge to succeed and become a productive citizen of Kentucky, and our current librarians are even more dedicated to making our students informed citizens. School librarians work to achieve all of the items on your list, as our Kentucky Association of School Librarian chair mentioned. Kentucky is fortunate and 70-75% of schools have certified school librarians who are making a difference. Please continue supporting professionally degreed school librarians, as they can increase school success and make a difference in the future. The Kentucky Library Association and the Kentucky Association of School Librarians are available for any questions or assistance. |
| Same | What do you expect from our schools? Parents and community members expect effective school library programs managed by full-time, certified school librarians. Certified librarians bring expertise to schools for promoting lifelong reading and learning, as well as for providing print and digital resources aligned to standards to support the school curriculum. Qualified librarians help students (and teachers) navigate an ever-growing digital world, providing instruction in the ethical use of information and technology to support learning. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? An important characteristic for schools is a thriving library media center, staffed by a certified, knowledgeable and engaging librarian. The library media center should be a hub of learning and activity, providing space, resources, and expertise for students, staff and community members for the use of technology and for creative collaborations for projects and learning, as well as for the access to current, quality reading material, both print and digital. |
| Same | How should we measure school success? Overall school success can often be attributed to the quality of the school library media program. Research consistently shows that quality library media programs staffed by full-time, certified librarians with strong budgets have a positive impact on student achievement. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? KDE's Beyond Proficiency @ your library is a set of guidelines for building effective school library programs. Schools can use the “Library Media Program Rubric” from these guidelines to determine areas of strength and areas of improvement? |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? Active, effective school library programs should be part of school success stories. Highlighting those great examples around the state is part of the mission of the Kentucky Association of School Librarians (KASL). In fact, a new Beyond Proficiency @ your library award will be introduced during the 2016-17 school year to recognize those programs that are deemed successful. |
| P - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Because I found out about the town hall meeting after it already passed for our area I am writing to respectfully offer my view of school success. I hope my input will be valued as you consider how the Dept of Education will move forward in how it rates schools and considers how effectively students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed after graduation. Currently, our family has one child in preschool and two children in elementary school (in 1st and 3rd grade). I have learned the last few years that instead of gaining mostly the knowledge needed in certain areas like reading and math- instead an unbalanced portion of their time is spent focused on test taking skills. I saw this particularly with my daughter's kindergarten and now first grade year. The math packets she would bring home to prepare for testing were huge for her age! I remember feeling awful for children who did not get an opportunity to go to preschool (to help them prepare for kindergarten) and for children who don't have parents who can (or are willin to) help them work through those test prep packets. Better use of that time could have been gaining knowledge and understanding our nation's history and government (especially at the second or third grade level and above). Additionally, more time engaged in physical activity (outdoor and indoor) are crucial to develop well adjusted, engaged learners. The benefits of more physical activity and sunshine far outweigh the drawbacks. I humbly request that the Dept of Education also let the teachers instruct and guide students to the best of the teacher and students ability and remove the mounds of paperwork (and shame) associated with being unable to get all students to the same testing or knowledge level. Students all have different backgrounds, home environments, gifts and capabilities. My husband has been a teacher for 16 years. He has taught in public school, private schools, gifted and honors classes as well as homebound, in school suspension & the kids who are getting their last chance to get on track (or go to juvenile detention). The goal is for teachers to do the very best they can. Penalizing teachers for not producing miracles is unrealistic, damages morale and hinders the state's ability to attract and keep teachers. Thank you for getting up everyday and looking for ways to improve the education of our children. I am sure it is a demanding and often thankless job. I hope you will take my suggestions to heart knowing that I too am invested in the future of our children. |
| T - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Below is a concern our district has regarding juniors not being allowed to use the COMPASS score in next year’s accountability model. I realize they could take the KYOTE; however, our community college does not administer it. I just wanted to let you know this is something we have been discussing in our district. When our students get back their junior ACT score, our district meets with individual students about the measures they can take to become College and Career Ready prior to their senior year beginning, thus, allowing them to take dual credit classes. In the past, students have had the ACT or COMPASS, if taken at a college or university, as a measure to reach college and career readiness the end of their junior year. With KDE potentially no longer allowing the COMPASS score to count for College and Career Readiness, our junior students are left with only the June ACT as an option to obtain benchmark status. Not having the COMPASS as an avenue penalizes our students by not allowing them to enroll in dual credit courses. If a junior meets COMPASS benchmark through a college or university, do they still have to take a transition course since the COMPASS is no longer accepted? Potentially, we could have seniors taking dual credit English, because they met COMPASS benchmark for the university, but still required to take transition English in high school because KDE will not accept the COMPASS benchmark score. Does this really make sense? We are penalizing students over a technicality. Our request is for KDE to allow any junior COMPASS score, taken at a college or university in the 2015-2016 school year, to count towards College and Career Readiness status in the 2016-2017 school year. Since the COMPASS will still be administered at colleges and universities through December of 2016, and it will be used for college placement, it should still count for their College and Career Readiness status and exemption from taking transition courses. |
| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Will your steering committee also include a nurse and nurse practitioner (who can speak to student health issues), a medical examiner (stakeholder for bus drivers due to exams for physicals), and at least one or two non-education based community leaders for "fresh eyes" and perspective? |
| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: As a former high schoolteacher, I'd like to suggest that 9th graders be tested on skills needed to establish individual and school baseline. Retest over same skills in the senior year to measure true growth. Teachers have to teach skills, not just information, and over the four years, hopefully most could master the necessary skills. As a parent, this would show me strengths and weaknesses of my child. As a teacher, I could readily see which skills I needed to focus on with my students through my lesson plans, strategies, etc. Further, students could personally gauge their progress, |

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| C - e-mail - 4/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: When choosing members of the steering committee, please include a member of the arts council. Fine arts MUST be measured in an authentic way that does not include self-evaluation without oversight. Arts are important and must be evaluated in a way that does not bubble in an answer or leave scoring up to the stakeholders. Surely we can get this right. |
| C - e-mail - 4/19/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I totally agree something needs to be done about our testing/accountability system. I have been in education for 25 years and have noticed over time how much we are stressing out over tests. In the process we are causing the stress to trickle down to our students/children. I have watched our schools go from teaching basic skills which we need throughout our lives to teaching toward a test. What are we doing?? We are showing our students that testing is much more important than what they are learning. emphasis we are putting on testing is going way too far. Yes, I am in agreement our schools need to be accountable but how far is too far? Another concern of mine and many others I have spoken to is the ACT and how we are holding students accountable for those scores as well. As an example, my daughter took the ACT 5 times and received around the same score each time. The score was sufficient to get in to college--WKU. As she went 4 years of college and decided to apply for the speech/language program she was forced to STILL use her ACT score to be a prerequisite to get in the program. May I ask, why? She proved herself over and over with her GPA, dean's list, many hours of volunteer work, many clinical hours, and worked while going to college. At the University of Kentucky she was told she had the same requirements as another candidate and the only thing that kept her out of the program was the ACT score of the other candidate was a few points higher. So, that tells me she is being evaluated on a test score and not her ability to do the workload and proving herself as a college student.--going on points once again. She had keys money that we had to relinquish because West Virginia does NOT look at the ACT as a way in to their competitive programs. She was good enough to get in Marshall University but not her own state of Kentucky.--all because of a test score that was meant to be a baseline to enter college. She entered but it still followed her. So, in turn Kentucky is losing many of their students to other state colleges and universities. Let's keep them here. Let us remember that not everyone can manipulate a test. Let us remember that a test score/points does not tell what type of student they are, nor does it tell what type of teacher someone is. I am willing to work with you to find a way to make all this work to our advantage. |
| C - e-mail - 4/19/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: As a retired school administrator (ms principal), I absolutely believe that school rankings should be discarded! I remember the times of examining rankings and thinking my school was better, or worse, based on a dismal tenth or hundredth of point! And this was just as much a product of the system and higher-level administration, as of my own perceptions! Most certainly, let us forget ranking with neighbors, and instead let us focus on what is needed and best for our individual school and community!! Let principals focus on this, rather than the competition stressed by superintendents, Boards of Education, and even parents!! |
| C - e-mail - 4/20/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I think there should be an education attorney in every IEP meeting because many parents don't understand their child's rights and many times the kids go without the tools they need to become independent. It shouldn't take 2 years to get OT or speech or anything else these kids need and who's life is it anyway--it's theirs. The laws are so complex it would take a lawyer or someone who's dealt in education for years to unravel them and in meantime the child goes without. How do I know this because I found my grandson school district guilty of failing him but couldn't do anything because of custody laws. Just because a child has dx of autism ADHD etc don't mean they don't have gifts or knowledge if we give them the right tools. Many maybe need changed to where they can get more one on one or technology--every kid matters but it's up to you to insure they get the tools and succeed. Don't let these kids that have a chance be left out because they don't get the resources they need or because their parents or caretakers don't understand all their rights. The kids deserve this right it's their life and their future. God created everyone and that includes kids with special needs. |
| P - e-mail - 4/21/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: My name is Marie Burns, and my family and I recently moved into Louisville, Jefferson County about 3 weeks ago. The current new student registration and placement process, quite frankly, sucks. It is worse for families should a child have an intensive, complex IEP in place from prior school districts. We have two children with IEPs: James Burns, 6th grade at Robert Frost Academy, and Ian Burns, 4th grade and NO PLACEMENT YET after almost 3 weeks. In all fairness, one week was closed due to spring break; however, we had met with a pleasant advocate Kerry Willis before we moved here to provide most current IEP placement for Ian, because we knew it could take up to a week to get him started in public school. Key words: public school. Well, Kerry has not been able to place him because the 8 cluster schools are REFUSING TO PLACE HIM. Let that sink in for just a moment. Refusing a special education child access to a free and appropriate public education. When I call Kerry, she has less and less updates to offer me, which indicates a knowing and willing choice of Jefferson County to deny my child not only his education, but a new district IEP meeting to establish a Kentucky IEP. UNACCEPTABLE. I have given Jefferson County more than enough time. There is no excuse for any of this depraved indifference to my child. He must be accommodated no matter what. I have also placed calls to the KY Department of Education for special education/ECE. I was told someone would be calling me back. My concerns are valid. My son also needs summer placement because it is clearly documented he experiences severe regression without it. So this is another hurdle that must be jumped. Unacceptable. I want to desperately believe all the hype this department promotes in being invested in education of ALL students, not just the normal ones. We left Oklahoma because eventually there will be no schools due to massive multiple revenue failures within one fiscal year. Education is slashed so bad there, that special education services undoubtedly will be attacked next. We came here for better and appropriate opportunities for our children. This is my feedback: Kentucky needs to be compliant across the entire state, and MUST adhere to all federal laws, none of which can be or should be pre-empted by any state law or policy regarding education. Significant changes across the country need to be implemented, yes, Kentucky being no exception. The current process here in our county is cumbersome, repetitive, and obsolete. There is no personal interaction during the process, done entirely online. Not everyone has access to internet, in case you might question why I bring that up. Neighborhood schools (in this case, reside schools) need to be re-evaluated. No parent should have to re-apply year after year (with no guarantee) to cluster schools, just to keep a child in one that is acceptable for the child's needs. I am frustrated, upset, and educated in what my children need. I do not just go away because my children may be financially inconvenient for the school district because we moved here at the end of March. Oh well. I can only speak for my experiences here in Jefferson County, and I can now understand why parents gave this county absolutely pitiful ratings for parent satisfaction. I am an advocate for my children who cannot express what they need in a way that gets noticed or addressed. No public school gets to pick and choose what students they educate. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my feedback. I feel this information is very relevant to your agency's request for feedback. |
| T - e-mail - 4/21/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for soliciting input. I want to measure high school student science success through actual science practices instead of a factual based recall biology eoc. I LOVE the NGSS!! I wonder how we can assess NGSS in the high school since there are so many different ways to implement the curriculum over three years. I did not feel that the CATS method of assessing everything in the junior year was effective in allowing us to address individual student misconceptions or really even the school due to different test forms given to different students and not all students being assessed on all standards. As a Chemistry teacher I would welcome a science portfolio or a set of different tests divided into life science, earth science, and physical science. These separate tests could be administered at any point during a student's career at the appropriate time based on a school's scope and sequence. |

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| T - e-mail - 4/22/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: My name is Rachel Barnes and I am the PE and Health teacher at Trimble County Middle School. I was at the Louisville Town Hall Meeting on April 21 but did not get the opportunity to speak. I am writing you as a representative of all Health and PE teachers in the commonwealth of Kentucky as a state board member of KAHPERD-the Kentucky Association of Health, PE, Recreation and Dance. I would like to personally and on behalf of our membership of 1100 members, thank you for providing the town hall meetings as a means of communication and transparency between the state and schools. I would also like to thank you for elevating Health and PE in ESSA by including them as a part of student's well rounded education. With that being said, there are some things I would like you to consider when deciding the future of education concerning PE and Health. Kentucky is currently 1 of 7 states without and elementary PE requirement; and 1 of 10 states without a middle school requirement. Also, our current high school requirement is only a half credit for all four years of high school which puts us last out of all 50 states in terms of PE requirements. Due to a lack of PE and Health in our state, among other things, we have seen child obesity reach epidemic proportions with one in three children ages 10-17 being overweight or obese. This is the first generation that children will begin not outliving their parents. This is not the way things should be occurring in our society. Without going too in depth, research shows that participating in physical activity improves student attendance, test scores, participation and enthusiasm for other academic subjects, motivation to learn and reduces disciplinary issues. Evidence also shows that effective school health education reduces students participation in behaviors such as smoking, heavy drinking, school misbehavior and violence. In my own school, I see the students for a total of twelve weeks. One day a week I take them to do a math program. This gives me a total of 48 days to cover all the Health and PE curriculum each year along with trying to instill in the students the importance and long term benefits of being healthy. I also have a very limited budget which prevents me from being able to purchase the equipment needed to make the program as successful as it could and should be for my students. I, along with many other teachers in my profession, believe that with more time and resources, the impact we could have on students success and achievement could be greatly increased. In conclusion, I want to thank you again for allowing me to speak freely on behalf of KAHPERD about what we believe will most influence student achievement and success. I hope these things are taken into consideration when important decisions are being made. |
| SA - e-mail - 4/22/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I am so impressed with how you handled the “performing arts ‘lady’” at the KEDC town hall meeting, that I forgot to ask my question after the meeting. I have attached a picture of us so you can place a name with a face. I was also impressed with your entire message and upbeat delivery. I have a two part question. What is your opinion of Charter Schools? What do you believe will be their status in Kentucky in the next few years? |
| P - e-mail - 4/22/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: please keep our schools having full time nurses. I am a grandparent of three elementary students at Jacob. Our nurse is so very needed. Two of my grandsons have ADHD and require medication. One of them has to have it administered even during the school day (as do several other students at his school) and he also has many allergties (even to foods)(and must keep an epi pen at school and he has asthma and the nurse has to keep a rescue inhaler there and administer it to him. Without Nurse Dana, we would totally be lost and even afraid to send our baby to school. I know there was flack about the everyone reads money be spent for nurses, but please find the funds somewhere as I believe every school needs a nurse full time. Especially now days. Between Allergies, diabetes, Asthma, ADHD and other health problems, not having one available could very well be catastrophic. Thank you for listening to me. |
| T - e-mail - 4/22/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: First, a big thank you for your visit to Louisville last night. It is reassuring to me that you are making Commonwealth voices a priority as you plan. I hope you'll continue such town hall meetings in the future. I was fortunate to attend last night's gathering, but did not have a chance to share my thoughts. So, I'll share a few comments here. I've had the joy of working with ESL students in Jefferson County for the past 6 years. In those years the population of ESL students has dramatically increased. In both the schools I work with over 7 languages are represented, thirty to forty percent of the student body population is enrolled in the ESL program, and I am concerned that many needs of this population are often overlooked. Here are my two primary concerns and suggestions: Currently in Kentucky there is no cap on the ratio of ESL students to ESL teachers. I urge you to work to change this. Surrounding states, like Tennessee, have a limit of 40 ESL student to 1 ESL teacher. In various schools and districts in Kentucky the current ratio well exceeds this. At both of my schools we have over 160 students in each program and only 3 ESL teachers per school to service them. Under current assessment regulations, ESL students are only allowed one exemption from testing accountability. This means that if a student arrives from a foreign country with no English a week before the test, the next year their test score will carry the same accountability as a child who grew up speaking English. This language barrier is nearly impossible to overcome in just one year. I strongly encourage you to reconsider this testing policy. Students' test scores should not count toward school accountability until they have achieved English proficiency on the ACCESS (English Proficiency) test. At the very least, their scores should be assigned to the district, rather than holding individual schools accountable for them. As an alternative to testing ESL students to show growth, I propose some form of portfolio assessment to reflect genuine student learning. Again, thank you for listening to Commonwealth voices. If there is any way I can be of service as you carefully consider the needs of ESL students, don't hesitate to call on me. I'm happy to help in any way I can. |
| SB - e-mail - 4/22/16 | What do you expect from our schools? I expect our school to be a safe environment for student to work to their very highest potential. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Important characteristics of a school would be that in which teachers have a vested interest in each student school life. School activities are balanced with educational opportunities, each student is part of "school life" and students are proud to call their school "The Best". |
| Same | How should we measure school success? School success is measured by the opportunities offered to each student. A student should be ready for college or career. A student should be able to lead a productive life and eventually live an independent life. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? Some schools will be more successful than others...some people are more successful but only in the individual eyes. If we put our best products (teachers) in our Kentucky schools and give those teachers the best tools then we have done the best we can do. Continuous education that is geared toward the grade or subject in which that teacher works will be a greater resource than these classes that teachers are having to take to reach beyond a Master's degree. |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? Our celebration of school success is our celebration of a student success. When that student is ready for the "next step" which could be the next chapter in a book, the next set of multiplication tables, the next letter of the alphabet....that is school success. We should make a student feel celebrated every day. |

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| C - e-mail - 4/25/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you when you visited the Lexington area. I hope that you understand how important the arts are to the people of Fayette County, and that includes the musical arts, visual arts, and physical arts (gym, health, wellness). As a new resident of Kentucky, I am learning about the school systems here. I have been told that not every school requires music to be a part of the curriculum. As a music educator myself, I strongly believe that every child deserves and needs a musical education. But this is not just my opinion; 83% of teachers and 73% of parents in the US believe that cuts to music programs are detrimental to student success: NAMM Foundation. (2015). “Striking a Chord: The Public’s Hopes and Beliefs for K-12 Music Education in the United States 2015” https://www.nammfoundation.org/file/480/download?token=cchSUnpG). I believe that music is important because it is a part of the aesthetic education our students need, but I also recognize the benefits of a music education on students’ overall well-being and achievement in other subject areas: Students who are involved in music are not only more likely to graduate high school, but also to attend college as well: Kraus N., Slater J., Thompson E.C., Hornickel J., Strait D.L., Nicol T. & White-Schwoch T. (2014). Auditory learning through active engagement with sound: Biological impact. <i>Frontiers in Neuroscience</i>. http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fnins.2014.00351/full. Students in high-quality school music programs score higher on standardized tests compared to students in schools with deficient music education programs, regardless of the socioeconomic level of the school or school district: Johnson, C. M. & Memmott, J. E. (2006). Examination of relationships between participation in school music programs of differing quality and standardized test results. <i>Journal of Research in Music Education</i>, 54(4), 293-307 http://jrm.sagepub.com/content/54/4/293.short. Despite impending budget cuts, I know there are ways to restructure our curricular requirements and distribute funds to support the hiring of arts teachers. Including the arts will only stand to benefit our students and ensure that students are well-rounded and well-educated citizens of our fine state.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/25/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I was recently made aware of a series of town hall meetings that were taking place across the state. Alas, I had missed the meeting closest to me in central Kentucky; but I noticed there was an e-mail link to submit concerns/questions. I wanted to voice my concern with a system that bases teacher accountability solely on testing and grades. A system such as this doesn’t encourage teachers to challenge students who are already doing well. I will use my son as an example; he is an 11 year old sixth grader who grade advanced in Kindergarten to the first grade. He is in the gifted and talented program, and while the content and projects are of interest to him, he is still not challenged. On his previous nine weeks progress report he had a 100% in two classes and a 101% in a third. While most parents would be thrilled with these grades, it tells me that he’s got it way too easy and has already mastered the content being taught. He enjoys the fact that the coursework is easy as he finishes his work in class and he never has homework. His teachers like that he makes good grades and performs well on testing as they benefit from his success as well – there is no incentive to offer him more challenging work that he might score lower on and/or that is not required for the end of year state testing. In the process I feel he is failing to learn the study skills and work ethic that will be needed for high school level classes and beyond. I have been told that at one time they offered seventh grade level work to sixth graders for certain subjects they’d mastered, but that due to the content of the year-end tests for the students’ actual grade level needing to be covered they had to revert back to keeping everyone on grade level; thus my son, and others like him who have grasped the content being taught and are ready to move on, keep swimming in place waiting for the end of the school year so that they can move on. We have a wonderful school system here in Marion County, so I don’t want this to be seen as an indictment toward the education system there; I don’t think this is a problem unique to our school system. I think it is an unintended consequence of no child being left behind – in the process no child can get ahead. I would like to see more resources, or other paths, offered to the parents and teachers of children who are excelling academically and don’t fit the standard testing schedule that is currently based on age/grade rather than mastery of skills or level of knowledge.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/25/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I am writing to you In regard to the need for a new revised accountability system for Kentucky Public Schools. I recently had the opportunity to work with the Dubai School Inspection Bureau using the United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework. The inspection framework is based on a Scottish system adapted to meet the needs of schools in Dubai. A large number of schools in Dubai are private (85%) but must be certified each year by the KHDA (Knowledge of Human Development Authority), a government entity. Members of the inspection teams are highly experienced educators from all over the world. To give you a short summary of the framework for the inspection, I share the following information. School inspections are structured around six performance standards and conclude with an overall performance judgement. The performance standards include: 1.Students’ achievement 2.Students’ personal and social development, and their innovation skills 3.Teaching and assessment 4.Curriculum 5.The protection, care, guidance, and support of students 6.Leadership and management. The choice of these performance standards is based on research into school effectiveness. Two of the key outcomes – students’ performance and students’ personal development form the basis for the first two standards. These two standards are keys to school effectiveness. Research tells us the most powerful factors determining school effectiveness are quality of teaching, curriculum, care, and leadership. These four standards complete the framework for inspections. Working with a team of nine professional leaders in education, I had the opportunity to inspect five schools in Dubai over a two month period. I found the system to be a thorough evaluation of schools and to be fair in its’ judgement about the effectiveness of the school. If you are interested in learning more about the system you can find the framework in its’ entirety on the website – www.khda.gov.ae. I do hope you will find time to review the system.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 4/25/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I attended the town hall meeting at Seneca High School and would like to build upon what the music students said. I am an elementary PE in Jefferson County and what the music students said about having a certified music teacher should also apply to Physical Education, but not just a certified person, a Physical Education certified position. I have a Masters Degree in Physical Education but if someone with an elementary education certification wanted to teach PE at the elementary level they are technically certified to do so even if they only had one PE class in college. PE teachers with PE degrees should be the ones teaching PE classes. Also, I think we should at how all the "special area" classes are funded. Principals should not have to drop PE, Music, Art, Computer, etc. because there isn't enough money in their budget to fund those classes. The special area classes help to provide students with a well rounded education and should not be the first things eliminated. Teachers of special area subjects should be part of the staff with the money to fund them coming from the same pool as classroom teachers. These special area classes should be available to all students in all districts in KY. In Jefferson County, if a principal decides they do not have the funds or wants to cut or drop a program we have to go to a pairings meeting. In this meeting we then choose by seniority among the schools that want the program. Teachers are usually split between two schools. Not being in a school full time is a disadvantage for the teacher. They are not able to get to know the students or the staff and the program is not the best it can be due to time issues and restraints. As a PE teacher, I again state that is important to have certified PE teachers teaching PE classes. It is very important for our students to get organized physical education and not just recess that is called PE. Studies have shown the importance of physical activity in the lives of children and adults. We need to develop physically literate students and to do that we need to expose our students to Physical Education programs from elementary to high school.</p> |

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| P - e-mail - 4/26/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: First off, thank you so much for asking for feedback. I often feel like my voice as a parent really doesn't matter, and when surveys are sent home, I feel like it's really just for form. I was under the impression you were truly interested in hearing our concerns and compliments, and I've also heard that positive things are on the horizon, a lot of teachers I know seem really hopeful for the first time in a long time, and that is wonderful. First off, I am a single mom of a 3rd grade boy. I come from a family of educators, not political administrators, but stay after school, grade through the night, students stay in touch for years educators. I went to Midway to pursue a degree in elementary education but ended up switching gears at the very end right before student teaching because my time in the classroom seemed to prove what my mom and other relatives were so concerned over-teachers can't teach students anymore, they teach a test. I was so frustrated and so broken hearted working with elementary teachers in Scott and Fayette County because they so often had to rush through material or skip it all together because there wasn't time. I can't tell you how many times I heard a child ask an excellent question, that would have lead to a wonderful discussion, and was told by the teacher "look it up at home". The schools I worked in were the ones with students who didn't have internet access at home, and likely didn't have the parental support to look it up if they did. To say that I was disenchanting would be a great understatement. I knew that I couldn't spend my career unable to encourage curiosity, deeper thinking, and a well rounded education. I knew that if I continued I would be forever graded on how my students tested, not how much they learned of value. My mom was a math teacher, she was the one who my entire life tutored every evening and weekends. Students came to our house from surrounding counties and private schools. She was the math teacher who wanted you to GET IT, not just get an answer. If you didn't understand the method taught in class, she worked with you on other methods. She spent hours grading papers because she gave feedback on all incorrect answers, "this is where you messed up". Around the time I walked off the education path was when she started being told she couldn't teach other methods, she had to teach the way the "academic coach" said she had to teach. We live in such a diverse country, but for some reason we seem to be making education one dimensional...I don't get it. As a mom I've run into so major frustrations with school. Bottom line, every single morning is a battle. My son has hated school since Kindergarten, which is heartbreaking considering how much I loved it. It's also very difficult to get out the door on time when good mornings are battles and bad mornings are him sick to his stomach because he doesn't want to go. I'm ashamed to say we are probably on the edge of being truant-and how do I explain why? Kindergarten should have been a positive experience. He tested in high and was placed with a teacher who had been moved down to Kindergarten from 5th grade in a shuffle and it wasn't what she wanted. How can you ask someone to teach Kindergarten who isn't called to? It's such a different animal! My son has had intestinal issues since he was born, colic, reflux, etc. We discussed that before the year started, and I provided a note from his specialist saying that he needed to use the bathroom more than most kids, needed more time, and also that stress or anger, etc. would likely put him in the bathroom even more. Fun stuff I know, and I also know how hard it is to find patience to deal with that when you have so much on else on your plate-like a class full of kids. This teacher responded by timing him in the restroom and counting down when he took longer than she wanted him to. This lead to accidents, not wiping, more stomach issues...and a lot of bullying because he stunk. He ended up moving down in reading, spelling and math. She wanted to hold him back. I disagreed, first because I knew he was doing great at home and there was more to it, but second because I have always been a firm believer that if a grade needs to be repeated, 1st is better than Kindergarten. I wasn't given the choice, which was most infuriating. Despite my concerns and comments as his parent-and my absolute willingness to repeat 1st grade if necessary, I wasn't allowed to choose. I have a major issue with that, and still do to this day. If it wasn't a behavior issue, and it wasn't hurting other kids, why couldn't I choose? We moved to a different school for the next year because he was ill at the thought of going back into her classroom. I had him tested at that school for first grade-he did beautifully. I sat with his new teacher and asked him gently "Why won't you do this work for Ms. ____?" "Because she thinks I'm stupid so I don't want to do it for her" I turned to the new teacher and asked why do you think he was bumped down? My son chimed in with "The tests mom. I knew if I didn't pick the right answers on the computer I could go to Ms. ____ class instead" He was 51/2 years old. In the end we did one year in private school and then went back to public school for another year of first grade and have been there ever since. He is incredibly smart, but he does have some behavior issues, some attitude...that made me want to hold him back. Plus he's very small. His kindergarten teacher saw me in the hall when we came back and said she wished I had listened since I held him back anyway. Inappropriate. But more to the point, I had asked for 1st to be the grade anyway, I knew he didn't need to repeat basics and more importantly I knew that emotionally to go through another kindergarten year would be devastating. I would not have spent the money on private school if they would have just been open to what I had to say, but they weren't. Side note-I made it very clear during our first conversation and on his paperwork that my son's dad had never been in the picture at all, and they kept sending home "dad and me" books to read, etc. I would send polite notes back, can we please have a different book, this one is difficult since B doesn't know his dad, he doesn't want to read it. This was often forgotten. I know we aren't the only ones in that situation, and I certainly don't take offense when people forget....it's just a fact. But I felt like this was an extra source of bitterness from my son on top of everything else.</p> |
| continued | <p>Overall I just felt like as a parent-maybe as a young single mom, my voice did not matter. Second grade was really wonderful. He had a teacher who clued in quickly to his heart, intelligence and stubbornness. This teacher made a major effort to communicate with me often. He challenged my son, which is what he needed. He would send an email and say the class is doing this, but B is interested in this and if you want to do that, I'm perfectly happy to let him. It was a great year, my son loved school, loved his teacher, and at the end of the year asked if he could be homeschooled by Mr. ____ because he was the best teacher ever. Third grade has been rough, which is extra frustrating since second was so awesome. Full disclosure-he's got a major attitude, and he's very difficult this year. I know that, I'm aware of that, I really am so sorry. We are trying hard to work on it. However, I have felt like there really hasn't been a lot of support or communication. More importantly he feels that way too. Since the start of the year he says that he's bored and that his teacher is either not talking to them or yelling at them. No in between. He says that she never gets up from her desk and that she is always on her phone texting or playing games. I asked him how he knows she's texting not checking emails and he says because he has to sit next to her and she moves her hands like I do when I'm texting-faster than emails and all the time. This is just appalling to me, I can't remember any of my teachers ever just sitting most of the day. They were up moving around, answering questions, engaging, etc. When I asked if any of his other teachers text he said yes-all during recess and only one of his teachers ever walks around and plays or checks in on them. I know that he's not always honest, I know that there are things he misunderstands. But I do not think this is one of them. His best grades are in the classes he loves-outside of his main room. The teachers he loves challenge him, engage with him. They aren't overly nice, he does get in trouble but he sees that they care. My point here-what is happening? How are we letting cell phones override the classroom? We see so much of people's hair in every other area of life now instead of faces, how can we allow that to start happening in the classroom? How is it good teaching practice to put socializing with other staff over engaging with students? Why is it OK to tell me that my child isn't trying and is a behavior problem when you aren't really watching the whole situation and reacting once it gets your attention? There was one incident this year when his teacher said there would have to be a silent lunch as a class punishment-OK I guess even though I hate the thought of taking away any of the time they actually get to be kids-I have never understood how that has a positive outcome in school, surely there are better punishments-but anyway-she didn't stay to enforce this herself, nor did she ask the lunchroom staff to supervise, she put a couple classmates in charge of telling on anyone who talked. I have a real problem with that in third grade. Yes, you should be teaching kids it's ok to stand up for what's right and stand up to their friends. But a punishment for the whole class should include the whole class, not create a situation where a couple kids can tattle on the kids they don't like. I fee like this year has done nothing but irritate my son and his friends. All of them feel like their teachers are not interested and don't care about them. It's way beyond "they are mean". This is third grade, they shouldn't hate school already! Last but not least-testing. If you couldn't tell from earlier comments, I've really struggled with how we test. I'm not against all testing by any means. I know that there needs to be a way to compare and keep things on a somewhat even playing field. I know that testing is part of life-very much part of getting into a good college, etc. I believe that we should be teaching good testing practices at home and at school-working together so our kids are prepared, so they aren't overly stressed, so that they can do their best. But I have felt that it is just an inappropriate amount of pressure, and it matters more than it should at an early age. A couple years ago I was told that I probably would have to take vacation in May due to staffing issues, it would likely be that week or nothing. Immediately I emailed the school, explaining the situation and said where I thought we would go and that we would take work with us and could we do a special project on the history of the island? Maybe a little power point on the light houses there? He had perfect attendance so far, and this was going to be just a week or two before school let out. I could provide documentation from work that it was the only time I had. Nope, testing. In the end, I worked out a different time for my vacation, but I was so furious that my 1st grader was not given permission to test at a different time and go with his family on a trip that absolutely had educational value. Every year they start buzzing about testing long before testing happens. Special bed times, special food, etc. First, shouldn't healthy habits be encouraged all the time? Furthermore-my son, and a few of his friends have gotten terribly upset when a baseball game runs a few minutes longer because they are afraid they will get in trouble when the teachers ask what time they got in bed. I appreciate concern from the teachers and school for my child's well being, I truly do. But I don't think it's appropriate to imply there will be a punishment if the school's suggested bedtime is not enforced. I think that it takes away from me as a parent to ask about that type of thing at school. Certainly if a teacher were concerned about my child's sleeping habits throughout the year I would hope that they'd reach out to me and ask if things are ok at home, have sleeping arrangements/habits changed. But to make such a big deal of it for one week is just ridiculous. I have felt a couple times over the years that my son thinks his teachers have the say at home too, and if I don't agree with them he will be punished. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I do care what teachers think, I want them to love my child, to invest in him, to work with me when things are difficult. I want them care, to know that I think he should respect them, obey their rules.</p> |

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| continuec | <p>But there has to be a line, and I think that when testing comes around, that line is crossed in an ugly way. Why are we only asked to write notes to our kids during testing? Why are they rewarded for testing well when it's one week out of the many? Why can't they either just reward them all for a stressful week, or reward them throughout the year for doing their best on regular school work? How can you reward a kid for their best when it is reflected by a score for a test they can't study for, but not reward a kid who does their best and does not get the same score? It's not like a spelling test. You cannot fairly or honestly judge who does their best. My son is very, very hard on himself. When he misses his "goal" he truly feels he is stupid and that he should just not try anymore because he will never understand, he is ashamed, he is worried about the repercussions. This makes me sick. There should never be guilt, blame, or punishment of any kind for not meeting a testing goal. He's so twisted up by the time he goes in there, I'm amazed anything positive happens at all. Earlier this year I overdid the pep talk by saying I hated it, that I hated that it mattered so much, that I hated what it does to him and his classmates, and I truly didn't care how he did. I told him-wrongly-just get through it. Don't make it a big deal. Well....he did just get through it. And it was bad. This time I'm saying "You are not a number, you are SO much more than a test. If your teacher can't see that, it's a shame and it's not your fault. But do your best, because learning to test will help you later, which will help you when you want to go to college and become a paleontologist. Do your best because you should always try your best. But don't stress, just do your best and let it go, your class work should say more about what you've learned than a test on a screen." I'm trying to teach him that if he does his best all the time on his work and in school as we move forward he will have so many opportunities, but if he doesn't he will only have a few choices and wouldn't it be better to be able to say no thank you to something than I wish I could have done that? This is a hard lesson with him though because he truly, truly hates school. He is 9 years old and in third grade and school physically makes him sick most days. It breaks my heart. On top of that his second grade teacher, some of his "specials" teachers, and his therapist are often saying to me how incredibly intelligent he is. They are amazed at the questions he asks, the random comments that come out of his mouth, and the work he produces when he is interested and someone is interested in him. I'm not saying he's a genius or gifted...I'm just saying that there is so much potential there, so much to give, so much he wants to know....but he hates school, he's smart enough to know his teachers have checked out, and he's given up. This is, I am sure so much more than you asked for. I just haven't felt comfortable sharing it really in any other way. I feel like to raise concerns or push is to mark myself as a difficult mom with a difficult child and things will be easier if we just keep moving and hope for more teachers like his second grade teacher in the future. I hope you heard how much I love learning, how much I love a great teacher and try to respect the ones I don't care for. I certainly don't want you to hear that we hate everything about our school, or the system. I don't. I desperately want his teachers to love kids, to love teaching, to engage, to push, to play, and to be encouraged and supported by administration to think outside of the box for kids who need it. To be encouraged to teach lessons, to teach kids, to foster a love of learning not focus on high stress testing methods and imply that is what matters most in school. I know that we as a nation are under a lot of stress, rules, and regulations with education. But I hope that we can make a change in our state that will start to shift the power back to teachers and parents instead of relying on a board of well educated but not necessarily well equipped or experienced people to decide what's best for our kids. Would we want surgeons doing the teaching who had the best education but minimal hands on experience in a variety of situations? Would we want the hospital manager dictating what happens in an OR because it's the procedure even when the well seasoned, gifted surgeon knows all bodies aren't the same and something different would work better? Why can't we do more for our kids? They don't just deserve it, they need it. I appreciate so much that all educators and school staff and administration put into providing the best they can for our kids. I hope that my comments and feedback did not come across overly negative. There really is a lot of positive! A lot of really wonderful staff and I know how hard everyone works.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 4/26/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Walton-Verona Schools had a group in attendance last night at the Education Town Hall. Thank you for the time you took to come up to Northern Kentucky. As a DAC of many years, I have seen the actual test (KIRIS, KCCT, K-Prep) streamline into a more reasonable test for students, however our younger students (5th graders) are still testing for 11 hours. Is there is a way to eliminate or minimize extended response and/or short answer questions within K-Prep? Are those type of questions needed for federal requirements? If not, would the state consider allowing districts to teach and score writing within the school district to eliminate those from the test? At Walton-Verona, we do not use K-prep results for instruction due to results being returned several months later, so anything that might help us get results sooner and still meet federal requirements would be helpful to districts. EOC testing gives immediate results and ARE being used for instruction within our district.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/26/16 | <p>What expect from our schools? I expect schools to focus on ALL children learning to read by teachers who KNOW how to teach reading. Primary needs to focus on the foundations and focus only on reading and math. The foundation must be solid to learn and grow from the base.</p> |
| Same | <p>What school characteristics are most important? Schools need focus on reading and math through primary. Positive character development, recess, positive examples of good, caring people, and teachers who are properly trained on dyslexia are all needed in our schools.....NUMBER ONE??? SMALLER CLASS SIZES! We build schools tooooooo big!</p> |
| Same | <p>How measure school success? ask the students....STOP THE TESTING???? We are robbing the children of their childhood! cChildren learn through PLAY!!!! BE POSITIVE, train teachers HOW to teach reading, be sure ALL children have positive experiences daily. Keep schools small so faculty knows the entire child. Ask the students.....more recess and no homework....they need to be kids.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 4/27/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I am a music educator with 24 years experience teaching in southeastern KY. I did not get to speak at one of the town hall meetings. Thank you for the opportunity here. I want to speak to the importance of the arts in the schools and how we measure the success of arts programs. There is tons of data on how arts training improves brain function. I share this type of thing with my students and their parents all the time. But I would like to share with you how my students in band have a much better attendance rate than normal, they want to be at school, they want to learn, they want to branch out into different areas of learning. I also feel that it is important that the arts are taught by specialist who have been trained in their area of expertise. We expect that it other fields of learning. Most importantly – We must have an assessment or system of accountability for the arts. There are too many administrators that will not properly support arts programs especially in southeastern KY unless they have incentive to do so. This is sad but true. I would like to suggest that KMEA already has a system of assessment in place for middle and high school bands and choirs for every region of KY. We would only need to utilize that system. I think cost would be minimal as this process has been in place for at least 40 years. The Capstone Portfolio was a good idea but there would have to be positive incentive for administrators to support these initiatives. Whatever process that is decided upon, the arts must have a significant place in school assessment and accountability or we stand to lose arts programs especially in this area of our state. Thank you for your time.</p> |

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| C - e-mail - 4/27/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: My name is Terry Thompson. I retired in 2005 after 29 years as a full time teacher, as the band director at Ashland Blazer HS, before that at Greenup Co HS. I have stayed involved with music education as a consultant, adjudicator of music festivals and contests in Kentucky, Ohio, and WV, and spent another year in 2011-12 as interim director of the bands in the Raceland-Worthington school district. I am also the President –Elect of the Kentucky Music Educators Association. From what I understand, the new Federal law, the “Every Student Succeeds Act” will require us to recalibrate our focus in aligning our law with the federal law. I suspect this will be no small feat on the part of KDE. I am also sure you are aware that “ESSA” names music as a CORE subject. I would hope you are giving thought to the accountability issue as it applies to how we measure school success and how we insure all schools are successful. The ARTS are the soul of a community. We know that students involved in a wide variety of activities, who are exposed to music, dance, visual art, are more creative, tend to think outside the box, and are likely MORE “COLLEGE AND CARREER READY” than those who simply go to school, take the core academic classes, and go home. Our responsibility as PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS is to make a well-rounded individual, give them the opportunity and ability to function in society. The liberal arts colleges and universities have known that for a long time. I would encourage you to develop a path that the students in Kentucky can walk that allows them to develop the skills, INTERESTS and talents they have, and NOT try and force them down a road they don’t want to travel. |
| Same | What do you expect from you school? • All classes, including the visual and performing arts, should be taught by a CERTIFIED, QUALIFIED educator. A well rounded education should, of course. Include the traditional core classes, but also have opportunities for kids to take classes that are DISCLIPLINE SPECIFIC and not included in other classes as an “aside”. • (Brass trio tour story, math teacher, site based reduction because of \$\$) and (schools laying off music, art teachers, thus reducing student’s exposure to QUALITY delivery of arts curricula). |
| Same | How should we measure school success? • The first thing I would encourage is to take the emphasis off of the STANDERDIZED test. The kids are tested to death. My daughter is a 4th grade teacher in Jessamine County. She is sometimes in her classroom 7 days a week to PLAN for covering all she is required to cover and still have time to administer the MAP tests, the common assessments, the district assessments, DRA testing, Stanford testing, all of which, of course, are to try and prepare the students to TAKE the KPREP. And, by the way, SHE is held responsible for the test results, not the K-3 teachers OR THE PARENTS OF THE KIDS WHO DON’T ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXCELL IN SCHOOL. Makes you wonder why anyone would WANT to teach elementary school. Time taken away from instruction that proves little or nothing. Let’s find a way to test the individual child while still holding the teachers, ALL THE TEACHERS, accountable. • The accountability model should include administrators. We know that the current system encourages administrators to allocate resources to the areas they will get the MOST POINTS. We need to hold them accountable for a WELL ROUNDED EDUATION for each child. I promise you there are teachers here who have seen the POINTS take presentence over the individual student. • The visual and performing arts must be a part of the accountability process. Without the administrators being held accountable for offering and supporting these programs, they very well could fall by the wayside. We have already seen that happen in some systems. |
| Same | How do we ensure ALL schools are successful? • My personal view is that this will be your BIGGEST CHALLENGE, Dr. Pruitt. All schools and communities are NOT created equal. Some have advantages others don’t. Communities with a large number of white collar, college educated parents will likely have a larger household income, tax base, and the advantages that go with that. College towns with parents who are professors, and where the college can and will offer help to the school systems would seem to have a built in advantage over communities who don’t. • I was encouraged to read the article in the Herald Leader yesterday where you stated you would like to explore doing away with the school rankings. I think you have the right idea. Sir, I think there are SOME THINGS you can’t quantify. There are SO many variables within a community that affects kids, parents, teachers, and “the process.” • But, schools should be held responsible for ADVANCING their students. We need a system that compares them to THEMSELVES, a standard, but NOT to other schools. |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? • Provide equal recognition for individual and group success. Whether it is athletic, academic, artistic, celebrate the success equally. While winning a championship on the court or on the field is a great thing for a community, the number of college scholarships awarded each year is equally important. • (tell story of Bourbon Co. band winning state contest and the rings) • Include success in EVERY AREA on the school report card and on the PROGRAM REVIEWS equally. |
| T - e-mail - 4/28/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for providing the opportunity to give feedback on the accountability system. Based on the comments you made last night, I am encouraged that our state is headed in the right direction. 1. I like the dashboard idea. The new system doesn't have to pit one school against another based on numbers, with a "compensating" formula thrown in to complicate matters more. Just report the data and let that speak for itself. 2. I am a music teacher. Let my work stand alone; don't combine all the arts together in one lump. I hope the new system will consider that everything that is valuable cannot be measured. I hope the new system will be based on student products and opportunities. Crunching this into a number causes people to be a little murky with the "integrity" portion of your vision. 3. There is undue pressure for schools at the top of the rankings to constantly improve. If you are successful, you are successful. Instead of increasing some point score, maybe the schools at the top would be challenged to reach out to another school - whether it was across town, or across the world. 4. It would be helpful when the new system rolls out, that we had an idea of what the rationale was behind it. What behaviors are we trying to avoid? What is the ideal? I have 3 schools and 800 students. What is reasonable for us to attain? |

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| C - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for visiting Bowling Green last night and hosting the Town Hall Meeting. As an administrator myself I greatly value the art of listening and I appreciate your efforts to engage teachers across the state in open conversation. I am also a musician and I take great pride in the strong support for the arts in our region – I certainly echo my colleagues comments in support of Arts in Education throughout the commonwealth. I would like to bring to your attention a topic that I think gets lost in many of these conversations. The role of higher education in preparing young teachers to both enter schools and sustain a life-long career and commitment to education. Higher Education, and the corresponding certification requirements, to me are caught between a rock and hard place. States are constantly reducing funding and asking for degrees with lower costs and lower credit hours, while education boards are constantly requiring more proficiencies to attain certification. I came to Kentucky in 2013 and the new requirement at the time was the addition of 200 observation hours prior to student teaching. 200 hours equates to 5 additional 40hr work weeks (not including the significant travel time per hour). Colleges are expected to embed these hours into existing classes so to not add additional credit hours to the degree; students are expected to track every hour, meeting multiple specific requirements (10 hours in this, 20 hours in that, etc.) and find the time during the academic year to make these visits; college teachers are expected to help manage and provide these opportunities without additional compensation; and most importantly local schools are expected to allow and coordinate these multiple visitors into their classrooms (background checks, scheduling, parking, visitor passes, constant classroom interruptions, etc.). I have heard that some of the more rural areas are struggling to meet the high demand of observation hours locally, forcing college students to travel significant distances for one hour of observation. I strongly support field observations – but 200 hours is simply a ridiculous number. To this day, after asking multiple times, I have not received a qualified justification for requiring this large number of observations. Now in 2016 it is the Literacy Requirement. Teacher Preparation programs are now required to include a Literacy Proficiency in all programs. To meet this new requirement we are being asked to add a 3hr course, taught by a credentialed literacy instructor (which colleges may have to create new positions for), to every education degree program. However, many education degrees are already well over 120hrs and we know that simply raising the total credit hours will not be approved (that isn't a good idea anyway). So, that means we have to TAKE AWAY 3hrs of an already accredited program to make room for the additional course. In specialty areas (music, art, theater, physical education) this is a very difficult if not impossible task because we end up having to take away hours from our discipline – which in turn means we risk accreditation issues from our individual boards – for music NASM. Last night a very impassioned young lady spoke about dyslexia. This is a vital issue in our schools, but she also suggested that EVERY TEACHER be trained to work with dyslexic students. In my experience that will translate to yet another broad requirement on teacher education programs to meet the needs of a select student population. I have talked with music teachers across the state and in those conversations I hear two things: with the certification requirements today they wouldn't do it over again, and they sometimes DISCOURAGE students from going into the profession because it's not about teaching music anymore, but instead about checking the boxes of a seemingly endless amount of broad based requirements. Let's get rid of the clutter and go back to basics – teach what you love, and share that with everyone around you. I apologize for the length of this email but I sincerely hope you consider the impact on teacher preparation programs when making decisions. The beauty of on-campus learning (at any level) is the vast diversity and expertise that exists among teachers, disciplines, activities, and organizations. These are the people, and the experiences, we can celebrate and recognize success in. Many thanks for your time and efforts in open conversation across the state</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I was pleased to attend the Town Hall last night in Bowling Green. I wanted to express thanks for the effort you are taking to listen to the voices of KY citizens, educators, and leaders. I did not have a chance to speak, but I wanted to share a few thoughts. I am a faculty member at WKU and I research accountability and, in particular, value-added modeling. Essentially I am a statistician. First, I wanted to comment that, if value-added measures (or student growth percentiles, or similar measures) are to be used to attribute student growth to particular schools or teachers, then this must be done very carefully. Even under the best of conditions, the technique is controversial. In practice, however, I've found that school districts don't always even use the best approaches (or outsource the calculations to EVAAS or similar organizations and simply trust them). It is particularly important, if value-added type approaches are used, to use appropriate pre-tests (e.g., not biology scores last year as a "prior" for chemistry scores this year), to use multiple assessments, when possible, and to use multiple years of data in making judgments about schools or teachers. It is also critical to be cautious in not relying on these "scores" too heavily. In case you are interested, I have just had published a review of value-added modeling (attached). I am happy to answer any questions if that would be helpful to you. Second, I wanted to express some more general thoughts about accountability. Since I just had an OpEd published on the topic in Education Week, I thought it would be easiest to just attach a link: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/04/27/educational-opportunity-is-about-more-than-access.html (Also attached as a pdf). My concern is that we don't quash student and teacher passion in our accountability quest. Thank you so much for allowing our various voices to be heard. If there is ever a way I can be helpful to you, please let me know.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: First let me say how impressed I am with our hire of Dr. Pruitt. The town hall meeting was wonderful and makes us as educators feel like we have a voice and someone is listening. With that said, here is what I wanted to share at the meeting but my concerns did not really lend to the focus questions presented last night so I decided to wait and email my concerns. Let me first give a disclaimer - I was on the "writing" team for the new Social Studies standards. I use writing in the most loose way of a term because we wrote very little of what is being pushed across the state and through the State Board of Education. We were pawns being used to pass these standards as "teacher created." As I write this, I am doing what Dr. Pruitt asked, I am envisioning students, and the students happened to be my own children. This has been my fight since June 4, 2014 and I am making another effort in hope that someone will listen. I just can't, in good conscience sit in silence without trying again. I can't go to my school, district, or the state for that matter and pass on what we are did as what is best for Kentucky students. When I took the opportunity to be on the Content Advisory Committee and to what I thought was to write new standards I did so as an advocate for the teachers and students of Kentucky. I will continue to do this as long as there is a chance to get a change. As a parent of three children in Kentucky public education, I will not sit in silence to see these changes seem to be coming out of these standards that are being forced upon our State. What we did is not our work. We simple took standards from the C3 and changing the order, condensing them somewhat, and acting as if we are doing something or have a voice. We are not! We did not! Our new standards are: 1. Poorly written. 2. Not teacher generated. 3. Unclear on what is to be taught. 4. Unclear on score and sequence. 5. Very strong in skills and inquiry which is good. 6. Very vague and lacking in history content - which is bad. 7. Not what is best for teachers. 8. Not what is best for learning. 8. NOT WHAT IS BEST FOR KENTUCKY STUDENTS. Many other states have used the C3 Framework to develop their standards and have done so effectively, but not Kentucky. New York, for example has done a fantastic job of creating standards that incorporates the C3 Framework in an effective why that is best for their teachers and more importantly, their students. (I attached a file of this). To close with a little history, I will quote William Lloyd Garrison as he said, "I will be as harsh as truth, and uncompromising as justice... I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard." It's what my children, all the students and all future students in Kentucky deserve.</p> |

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| T - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I was planning on going to the town hall meeting in Murray tonight but it turns out I won't be able to make it, so I'll send my thoughts here. Overall, I think 1) if there has to be an EOC, the math one should be for Algebra I rather than Algebra II; 2) math teachers should have more freedom in what/how they teach so that math classes can be more engaging to students; and 3) the school day should not be allowed to start so early and there should be a minimum required time in between classes to allow both students and faculty/staff a bit of human dignity. First, there is far too much standardized testing, and although I understand the logic behind the End-of-Course exams in terms of accountability, I think the Algebra II exam covers material that is too difficult for many of our students to have it be the basis for judging schools, particularly in low-income schools where students often don't have time or energy to complete much homework and are much less likely to be able to relate to and understand the material. If EOCs are to remain, the math one should be changed to Algebra I. It makes more sense to ensure all students have a solid understanding of Algebra I by the time they graduate than to cram all the complex Algebra II topics into one exam that unnecessarily stresses out and demoralizes our students and overworks our teachers. I also think teachers should have more freedom in what they teach; less complex required content would allow for spending more time on creative teaching methods so students can enjoy a more exploratory math classroom experience. Another policy that would make both teachers and students dread the school day a bit less is not starting so early. Our school day starts at 7:26 am, which means teachers have to be there by 7:00 am, meaning we have to wake up at 6:00 am or earlier if we want to adequately prepare for the day. Requiring the school day to start after at least 8:30 would let everyone sleep in an extra hour and make the day overall more productive and enjoyable for everyone (this is still much earlier than the natural waking time of teenagers and 20-30-somethings - http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2015/sep/09/why-you-should-start-work-at-10am-unless-youre-in-your-50s - but I imagine it'd be a stretch to ask for a start time of 10:00 am). This would still allow most parents who work 9-5 jobs to get to work on time if they drop off their kids to school by 8:30. If everyone is always tired, you can't expect great performance. I also think the student-to-teacher ratio should be smaller and teachers should be paid more, but I understand the limitations on that. And longer lunch breaks that include recess for students and healthier food (e.g., more fresh and local fruit, vegetables, and plant-based proteins and less meat/carbs). It's unfair and unhealthy to expect students to sit still for 6 hours a day with only one 20-minute break for lunch and 4 minutes between classes. It's no wonder they have trouble focusing.</p> |
| Same | <p>What I expect from our schools - I expect them to not just be somewhere that students are crammed full of as many facts and as much memorization as possible to "prepare them for college," but somewhere that students should feel excited to go to every morning. As a math instructional assistant, almost all of my students hate math and complain about how they will never need to know it. Often they are right, especially with some of the more advanced topics. We usually answer that we are preparing them in case they later decide to become engineers or scientists and otherwise it's about the logical problem-solving process - however, there is so little time to teach every topic that we don't really have time to explore the logic behind everything. Math class therefore becomes an incredibly boring, rote memorization class. This provides further support for slowing things down, letting kids explore math a bit more, and only requiring an Algebra I EOC. Another thing I expect from our schools is for them to not be reminiscent of prisons. In our school, we have 4 minutes in between classes. This is probably designed to prevent students from congregating in hallways which can sometimes lead to fights breaking out, etc. – but it also prevents them from having enough time to, for example, use the bathroom and visit their locker if needed. It also prevents faculty from having enough time for bathroom breaks. Sometimes I have to go 4 hours before I can use the bathroom, so I have to either purposely dehydrate myself to avoid discomfort, and or leave my students unattended for a brief period of time. I understand this is probably a site-based policy, but a statewide policy requiring sufficient time in between classes would ensure that all schools treat their students and faculty with this most basic respect.</p> |
| SA - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I do greatly appreciate your willingness to hear the educators of Kentucky. The meeting last night was interesting. My name is Curtis Higgins, Principal Hopkinsville High School. I met you along with many others last night and thoroughly enjoyed listening to you. Two questions/comments: 1) Why does the learners component have to be so complicated? Measure student growth yearly, each individual student. Make schools responsible for students that start and complete the year only at the same school. Novice Reduction and GAP closure will be a result of measuring learning growth of each individual student. Measure college readiness based on a measure set up by our state universities, community colleges and two year post secondary learning institutions. Measure Career Readiness based on Military Recruitment guidelines and Industry Certifications of Career Tech education programs. Keep the same measurement of Graduation Rate as we have now. 2) Stop moving the target that schools shoot for to display their effectiveness. Many schools in the state have shown tremendous growth and met a benchmark to display proficiency at their school. We are considered a proficient school if we are in the top 30%, but in all honesty, we met the score and remain in only the top 60% or so. This makes us look ridiculous in the eyes of the general public that know we have not made the top 30% but have met a score that says we are in the top 30%. I agree with your statement that the system Must be meaningful, simply measurable for all.</p> |
| P - e-mail - 4/28/16 | <p>How I define school success? My two boys, 1st and 4thgrade, have always enjoyed school. I have one who loves reading and PE; another who is a math and science whiz. My 4th grader is required to complete the state KPREP testing. Over a month ago, he started whining about “not wanting to go to school today” and “school is so boring”. However, my 1stgrader loves school just as much today as he did on his first day. Why did I all of a sudden have one child seemed to dislike school? After several days of hearing my 4th grader whine, I finally asked him why—what had changed at school to make him not want to go? His answer shocked me. “Mom, we just don’t learn anymore. We don’t do anything like science experiments and math and social studies projects. All we do is read a passage and answer questions. It’s to get us prepared for testing. I hate it and it makes me hate school.” School success should not solely be based on KPREP scores. Because when testing becomes the focus, learning ceases. School success should not solely be based on KPREP scores. Because when testing becomes the focus, my child “hates school”. It is such an injustice to judge a school’s success on one test. Success should be based on a student’s grades throughout the year—have they shown improvement? Do they exhibit the skills to move on to the next step of learning at the next grade level? Success should be based on whether or not each student is becoming an independent thinker, able to contribute to the world around them. Success should be based on allowing teachers to help students in all areas of learning—academics, citizenship, character, ethics. Success should be based on teachers being able to teach their students to love learning, not hate a test.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/29/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: It is important to keep the arts (art, band, music) as a core subject in our schools! And please do not cut their funding.</p> |

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| T - e-mail - 4/29/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I attended the Town Hall meeting last night in Murray and spoke a little about music and the arts and more about the desperate need for Autism training of our teachers and staff and the need for resources for this growing number of students in our state. My son is doing amazing with full-time ABA therapy at school. Our private insurance pays for this. There are many autistic children that are not allowed to have outside ABA therapists in the school. to work with their child. Usually the teachers and even principals are very supportive of the idea. (My principal said he would lnot like to turn down free help!!!) However, typically this assistance is stopped at the special ed directors for the district and they do not allow these trained therapists in their schools. I think this is ridiculous because we allow outside speech and occupational therapists in and should be able to work it out for this incredible therapy too. Sometimes they argue that teachers are trained in Autism but that is simply not true and a teacher or untrained aide cannot accomplish what a trained ABA therapist can do. My son is proof that this works! He is doing so well and I know it is because of the resources that my school has put in place for him and because of how all of us work together to do what is best for him. There was a lot more I would have liked to say but for time sake did not. As a classroom teacher and parent, I must tell you that I am thrilled that our accountability system is being restructured and analyzed for improvement. The other day my 10 year old daughter was sitting at our table doing worksheets. I asked her if it was homework and she replied no, that she was studying for the KPREP. This is disturbing to me. After talking to her I realized that she is very stressed about this test! Even though our school is amazing (It should be a model for other Kentucky schools... I'm not kidding or exaggerating,) she is feeling serious stress about this test. I believe we have the best principal, teachers, staff, and students of any school and our teachers are telling students to do their best and that is what matters, but students feel the pressure and children like mine especially want to do well. She is extremely smart and always does well, but she was devastated last year when she didn't score a Distinguished in math. She cried and cried. She was confused because she always feels that she is better at math and in our STAR tests scores at least 3 grade levels ahead, but scored Distinguished in Reading and Proficient in Math. I feel that there is something wrong with the validity of the test if students can score 3 grade levels ahead on a nationally referenced test but are not considered Distinguished on the Ky test in her grade level. I am also upset that she feels this pressure and just dreads testing week so much when she normally loves school. Another issue is how complex this testing system is. I liked what you said last night about you should be able to explain the system to someone in line at the grocery store. It is currently not that way at all. As a parent and a teacher, I beg you to make this new system less complicated, shorter and less stressful for students. The program reviews are another issue all together. I am in charge of the Arts and Humanities program review at our school. I spend countless hours documenting evidence and putting in the evidence and rationales into ASSIST. Our program is awesome and our students get to have many different incredible arts experiences. I try to score our school fairly and only put in what I can completely back up with evidence. However, other schools that I know of score higher than us but don't give their students half of the experiences. Therefore, the current system of program reviews is such a subjective system that it is not fair at all. It seems crazy to me that something so subjective would even be in our accountability system. However, the idea of it is amazing. I love the idea of showing what we are doing but with no one from the state reviewing it at all or any examples of what each indicator looks like, it is left to the discretion of teachers and principals who are deserate for great test scores and I believe there is much that would need to be done to make this an effective system. I desperately hope that you include teachers from all across the state and a broad variety of subjects as this system is developed. I think for too long the people in it everyday and who are affected the most, have the least amount of say in what is so crucial to our future as a state and a country and teachers are the ones who really understand the students and what will help them the most! While there are no easy answers, I do believe that there are amazing teachers, administrators, and parents in this state that could work together to recreate an amazing system that would be the most beneficial to students.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/29/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for traveling all over Kentucky to listen to us. It is a positive approach and much appreciated. I am an art teacher in Graves County. I teach 4 days a week at two schools. I see over 800 students in my 4 day week, each class receives 45-50 minutes of instruction. I have been teaching since 1989, with five years off to spend with my son. I have been extremely fortunate to have art positions throughout my teaching career, although they are part-time. I have a B.F.A. in Art Education and a Master's in Guidance. My concern is two-fold. First, with the emphasis on testing, the arts in elementary schools are often seen as “planning time.” I work extremely hard to provide a high quality art program with discipline based lessons following the National Standards. My students do participate in art exhibits and I have had winners in art contests. The sad part is that even when students receive awards or create amazing projects, often they are overlooked. Art is a wonderful subject that connects with every other academic subject and helps students learn to think creatively and solve problems. That type of thinking isn’t easily assessed, it takes time but it is foundational to learning how to think, which is what all of our students need to achieve. I think our approach needs to become more child-centered and less assessment centered. The second issue is Program Review. I have despised it since it began. Not because I am lazy, but because I find it insulting. I am a certified arts professional. I know what I need to teach and I teach it every class. I do not like keeping notebooks of evidence filled with photographs and explanations of what I have done only to have a committee look over it and decide whether it is acceptable. It is not an accurate assessment. I have watched teachers manufacture evidence or stretch the truth about what they are doing just for Program Review. I have seen teachers decide we needed another project just to put in Program Review when no learning took place, it was just one more source of evidence. I honestly don’t know how to truly assess art in a standardized testing format. I have been through KERA, I used to give paper and pencil tests, I have been through the performance events and now this. None of this really changed the core of what I do. I got a wonderful art education at Murray State University and I have kept to the true foundations of that throughout all my teaching years. I think Program Review is extremely frustrating and a waste of time and resources. I honestly think the core issue goes back to my first concern. If school systems cared enough to hire quality certified arts teachers, then students would receive a legitimate art education. Sadly, many school systems will move an ineffective teacher to teach art, music, drama and dance instead of firing him/her. If a teacher is ineffective in an academic setting, why would they do any better in an art setting? I don’t know the answer, but I do know that students love art and for some, it is a great source of joy and confidence. I hope that in the coming months, the KY Department of Education will continue to give a hard look at these issues and with some creative thinking, figure out a positive solution for all Kentucky students.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 4/29/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I was not able to attend the commissioners Town Hall meeting in Murray Ky last night because I and the parents of the approximately 120 students from MMS who are in the band program were attending their Spring Band Concert held in Lovett Auditorium on the campus of Murray State. Truly the commissioner should have attended that concert and witnessed the importance of the arts in our public schools for himself. Or last week when for the Arts and Humanities Night we were treated to 3 choirs, 2 plays, performances by 3 small musical ensembles and the Jazz band as well as being able to view all the amazing visual art produced by kids from the 4th through the 8th grade. It is vital that we expand our children's imagination and creativity as well as their knowledge of reading, writing, history, math and science. All of these will work together to produce well rounded individuals ready to excel in today's world. Keep the arts and humanities as core content in our schools. As a concerned parent and life long resident of Ky I feel you should be made aware of what we as parents want for our children and expect education in Ky to provide.</p> |
| T - e-mail - 4/29/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: First of all I want to thank you for having several town meetings to encourage teachers, parents, and administrators to voice concerns regarding testing. Currently I teach first grade, however, I taught in a testing grade for 7 years. Part of the reason I requested to move grade levels was because of the pressures of testing. It was so intense that I would make myself sick in the weeks leading up to testing week. I never knew if my students would be on “top of their game” during that week or if they would feel so nervous they would shut down. I’ve experienced both scenarios as well as students having panic attacks in the middle of the test where every second counts. It’s very difficult for a teacher, who knows each individual student and their academic abilities, to sit back and see that child who's having a bad day be academically judge on one test. I can't say that I know how to solve this problem. I think assessments are a wonderful tool for driving instruction. I just feel there has to be a better way. Once again, thank you for listening to our concerns.</p> |

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| SA - e-mail - 4/29/16 | Thank you for the opportunity to share with you at Murray Middle School last night. I am looking forward to us working together to bring productive changes and continued success to our schools. I am the principal at Mayfield/Graves County Area Technology Center in Mayfield and due to the increased emphasis on College and Career Readiness we are experiencing a growth in student interest!! That is obviously a good thing but with that increased interest we do not have sufficient resources to meet the demand. I have submitted paperwork to the Office of Career and Technical Education to hire an additional Health Sciences teacher and recently discovered that I am one of at least 4 ATC's in West Kentucky to do so. The initial conversations with OCTE leadership leads us to think that there will be no additional staff added to our schools due to a lack of funding.. If that is so I will be forced to deny enrollment to approximately 80 students who have chosen a career path in Health Sciences related field. Also with increased enrollment we will need more funding to purchase supplies for our programs like Welding, Electricity, Machining Technology and Construction. Over the previous 3 years my supply budget has been reduced by 33%! More funding for additional staff and supplies are needed. I am aware that this is more of a legislative issue but wanted you to be aware. |
| C - e-mail - 4/30/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I had the pleasure of attending the town hall meeting at NKU and asking the Commissioner to insatiate a statewide dyslexia task force made up of all stakeholders including experts in the field of dyslexia. I would be glad to work with the department on this to help provide insight and collaboration in the areas of early childhood identification and teacher training. For students success and what is expected from our public schools, is to have every child reading. |
| P - e-mail - 5/1/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I attended the Town Hall meeting in Murray on 4/28. I raised the issue of kids needing more recess in our schools. Recess allows more physical and social time for our children. In my opinion, there is far too much emphasis in Kentucky on instructional minutes and not nearly enough on child development. Recess allows our children to develop in important non-academic ways. There are many articles online that refer to an experiment in Texas that increased recess. My children attend Murray Elementary School and I am a member of the SBDM Council there. When requests for longer recess and lunch came up last year, we were constrained by the number of instructional minutes. Please consider requiring more recess time in schools. |
| T - e-mail - 5/1/16 | What do you expect from our schools? I would like for schools to give equal education to all students that prepares them to be effective citizens. Practically, this means removing barriers from students who do not have the resources needed for success. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Integration, rigor, empathy, community,diversity. Excitement. |
| Same | How should we measure school success? Is the student body going to go on and become successful citizens? -That is the long term, final goal. Short term: Does a student feel like they belong? If they have difficulty in an area (health, scholastic, social, emotional), is the school set up to help them? Obviously testing is a part of this-you want to know what a student knows and doesn't, but that is only one of many ways to find out how a student is doing. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? Working with the problems that are specific to a school's populace. If a school's populace does not have access to health care or healthy food, these should be addressed at that school. Obviously, this takes resources. I would much rather pay higher taxes and see that money go to schools rather than prisons. Promote the best teachers into the classrooms instead of out of them. |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? Focus on the teachers and schools who are being the most successful in the toughest areas, and reward them so they stay there! |
| T - e-mail - 5/1/16 | What do you expect from our schools? Places where children learn in a progression that makes sense for their grade level. Safety. Trained teachers. Less fluff and more focus on learning content so that they can be competitive in today's job market. Meeting students at their current level and pushing them further constantly. Inclusion of ALL special groups in this, including our advanced and gifted students. I'd also like to see, especially in high school, topics like using a checking account, setting up savings, budgeting, investing, how to keep up with your bills and pay them on time, responsible spending, etc. |
| Same | What school characteristics are the most important? <i>Safe, positive, interesting environment A place where teachers and students want to be</i> Challenging ALL students at their level: ECE, on-grade-level, advanced, gifted |
| Same | How should we measure school success? NOT by student attendance, which the schools have little or no control over, NOT by the number of suspensions because this encourages schools and counties (JEFFERSON) to keep in school those students who are constant disruptions and/or violent and dangerous. NOT by the number of students who pass to the next grade level, Are students improving, showing real steps in what they know? A test at the end of grade 3, grade 5, grade 8, grade 10, grade 12 to measure basics and see if they have learned what they need to move forward to the next level. HOWEVER, this test should take into account our ECE and ESL students and adapt to their needs and levels of expected growth. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? Tighten up behavior expectations so that schools are places for learning, not disruptive. Tighten up the curriculum so that students are learning the basics they need to be successful. Give more power to make day-to-day decisions to the schools themselves and less power to the state or district-level authorities. Focus on math and reading/writing skills foremost; if they need extra time in these subjects, work with them in small groups for part of the day/week and remove them from science and social studies until they catch up. Find a way to hold parents accountable for their child's behavior! Maybe start suspending IN the school and require a parent to come sit with the student in class. |

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| Same | How should we celebrate school success? <i>Students love incentives and rewards like recognition, special events, their names published in school papers and on the walls, bulletin boards, etc. Teachers would also love to be recognized for a job well done.</i> |
| T - e-mail - 5/1/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I understand there was a town meeting held earlier in the week and I had really hoped to be there. I often wonder if these types of meeting(s) really work to convince someone to change the way things are handled or if it is more just a sounding board for people to vent and feel they've made a difference (when they really haven't) in their community. I was unable to attend because one of my 4 children had a band performance. As I said I have 4 children, ages 19,16,13,7—one is in in college and the other ages are self explanatory. I understand that we are under a budget crisis. That our nation is under a budget crisis that doesn't seem to have an end. I realize that one of the considered ideas is to remove the arts from schools. You know at the first sentence of this email that I'm going to show you as an (unemployed) English Ed teacher that we need the arts, and trust me—I won't stop there. So thank you for reading this email thoroughly and giving us a voice. Thank you for listening. What the A & H means to our family: I was an awkward child who wasn't great at sports and really couldn't sing all that well, but could harmonize with girls glee in High School. I won a ribbon one year in art with Miss Kriefall for the most positive atitude and never giving up. I was in 3rd grade and I still hold that dear to my heart. I'm nearly 40. It gave me community I wouldn't have had other places. Many of our life problems were solved at those art tables in high school too. I also learned to draw things that my baby boy giggles over now. It is a life long learning process, not just something they do once and forget it. My husband is a Physical Education teacher and he is the sole bread winner in our family (which I will share the details of why shortly) and thinking if we lose A & H that PE won't be far behind. Our nation is the most obese nation in the world. He works hard to change that one child at a time and it's working. The obesity rate has dropped steadily in their school system. My college age son was a trumpet player (a gifted one) and while he is a concrete learner and very intrinsic in his thinking and motivation he has played in the world of art and developed skills he would never have had otherwise. He has entered art contests and now pursues a career in marketing and entrepreneurial skills. My Junior (for another 14 days) is doing spring training for Marching Band for his 8th year as a Sax player. He competed with MHS Marching and received 2nd in the state of Kentucky and won the Festival of Champion on MSU campus. They work tirelessly and our band directors are excellent as reflected by the ratings. He is also an avid artist and when things in his life have been stressful-- he draws-- and has won art contests.. He has a talent that could be used int he future. Our MISD fostered both of those abilities. My daughter is 13 and was left paralyzed in a matter of hours from an auto-immune disease called Transverse Myelitis. She was a completely normal and healthy child prior to that and has seen the last 6 years and 15 days in a wheel chair. It was very difficult redefining life for her. She doesn't have cognitive disabilities and so she is unqualified for many things, but unable to complete others. A & H has given her the ability to try so many things. Tiger TV allowed her to gather, develop and produce info for her school. Art is something she has complete ability with and she is quite creative and on the same plane as her cohorts when she is in art class. She isn't left out as she is in PE or football games and the like. Band has been an amazing thing to watch her work through. She has played the flute for the last two years and conquered fear of the public and being able to work through speaking out for her own needs of accessibility and assistance. Most theaters are not accessible in case you weren't aware. A & H provided a life outside of the classroom for her where she could be herself with her friends. It has made the sting of losing her ability to walk a little less painful as she looks forward to her 8th grade year and the projects that Ms. Maley always saves until the 8th grade year. The students watch her process and love her. I've noticed in my home that if my children have a bad day and refuse to talk about it—I can get them being creative in some way and it spills out. There is something in our brain that responds to creativity. It allows that process to work with other things going on un the environment. It hurts my heart as a mom, and a teacher to hear that we could lose such an integral part of the learning process. I'm confident that if we want to see a change on the world, that we have to be active in that moment. We cannot expect everyone else to do the work, but we need our people in places of authority to be our voice and to be active on our part. At the risk of being completely cliché we need to realize these children will be running the world we live in—a world without anything of personal value if we keep it up. Where would we be if people hadn't ever put a basketball in Michael Jordans' hands or a paint brush in Van Gogh's or a key board in front of Stevie Wonder. |
| T - e-mail - 5/1/16 | What do you expect from our schools? As a parent, I expect a quality education that helps my child thrive academically, mentally, artistically and athletically. I expect my child to receive instruction that benefits him the way he learns. My son is profoundly dyslexic, with ADHD and Sensory Processing Disorder. I expect my son's school, as well as all Kentucky schools and districts, to provide early screening for dyslexia, teacher training on the warning signs and accommodations that can be provided in the general education classroom, and the multi-sensory Orton-Gillingham style interventions and strategies that he needs to succeed academically. I expect all Kentucky schools to follow the Guidance Document released by the US Department of Education in October of 2015, as well as, the Kentucky laws on RTI that identify dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia as specific learning disabilities that should be remediated through multi-sensory interventions. As a teacher, I expect our schools to provide me with training on any and all disabilities, learning differences, and learning styles so that I may meet the needs of all my students, not just those “middle of the road” kiddos. I expect my administration to provide me with clear expectations and job duties. I expect my administration, as well as KDE, to give students the number one voice and teachers the #2 voice in how our Kentucky schools should be run, held accountable, and honored. I expect teacher leadership and professional learning to become a number one priority as we move forward in revamping our accountability system. I expect my school, as a teacher, to follow the Guidance Document released by the US Department of Education in October of 2015, as well as, the Kentucky laws on RTI that identify dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia as specific learning disabilities that should be remediated through multi-sensory interventions. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Student voice, Teacher leadership, Shared accountability and responsibility, Professionalization of the teacher trade, Positive school culture, Balancing of student mental health v. academic success, Well balanced emphasis of content (core contents, arts, and PLCs), School and Community Collaborations, Project Based Learning style, of instruction/learning, Student lead learning |
| Same | How should we measure student and school success? Compare apples to apples, not apples to oranges (Look at individualized student growth in math and reading; do not compare one group of students to another); Evaluate growth in smaller increments v. one HUGE test at the end of the year; Stop putting so much emphasis on the test....those students who are already proficient or distinguished will more than likely remain so (its like those A and B students in your classroom...they are somewhat naturals); Those students who we attempt to encourage each year just before testing with pep-rallies, posters, awards, flashy songs and dances...are those students who more than likely experience test anxiety. The more we “encourage” them, the more their anxiety increases. STOP IT! Just take the test and quit making such a big deal about it. Program Reviews..... are repetitive, wordy, time consuming, and ridiculous. They idea behind them, however, is spot on! Program Review must be: Short and to the point, The ASSIST program must be removed from the factor (it is unbelievably difficult to navigate). Make the indicators very specific and not so vague, A simple list would be suffice “how do you incorporate music into math at RCMS?” You cannot hold a school accountable for a Foreign Language program when there is NO MONEY FOR a foreign language teacher! Some of the current indicators cannot be anything but “No Implementation” for reasons beyond the school's control and should not be counted against the school. |

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| Same | <p>How do we ensure all students and schools are successful? Dyslexia is a type of learning disability, neuro-biological in origin, characterized by fluency, spelling, decoding, and comprehension difficulties. This disability often seems out of character for the child, due to an average to above average intellectual ability, as well as, other significant gifts and talents. Many dyslexics are considered “twice -exceptional.” Fifteen to twenty percent of school children in the English-Speaking population are estimated to experience difficulty acquiring basic reading skills (Boardman, Arguelles, Vaughn, Hughes & Klingner, 2005; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010; International Dyslexia Association, 2010; Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003; Ness & Southall, 2010). As teachers, we are prescribing the wrong medicine, the wrong strategies for improving the learning experience of 1 of every 5 of our students. According to Yale Researcher, Sally Shaywitz, twenty percent of our student population are specifically dyslexic. This particular learning difference is mentioned as one type of specific learning disability in Title 1/A/602 (30), in The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). Because the research has evolved so slowly over time, there are many miscommunications and misunderstandings surrounding dyslexia. The strategies necessary for a dyslexic person to show growth in language, reading comprehension, spelling, and vocabulary are very specific and unique. With the implementation of multi-sensory strategies and interventions, a dyslexic student begins to gain momentum toward meeting grade and age level expectations. These strategies, specific to positively impacting a dyslexic student’s learning, are not taught to pre-service teachers and often cost districts excessive amounts of money to train teachers and purchase the necessary materials. Though the costs for the correct interventions may be high, we must ask ourselves, what are the ramifications of not providing the accurate strategies and interventions for students with dyslexia, which in statistical terms could be as high as high as eighty percent of those students already identified with a specific learning disability, according to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and one out of every five students not currently receiving special education services (Shaywitz, 2003)? Without an appropriate education, dyslexic individuals are at a high risk of not being college and career ready. As reported by American Dyslexia Association, over 40 million American Adults are dyslexic - and only 2 million know it. Furthermore, only twenty-one percent of dyslexic individuals receive a post-secondary education and even more appalling, forty-eight percent of our nation’s prison population is dyslexic, as found during a study by University of Texas Medical Branch in conjunction with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (published 2000). By ignoring the facts, we are setting a huge portion of our students up for failure. The US Department of Education released a Guidance Document in October of 2015 that stated there is NO REASON any school in the United States of America should be withholding dyslexia from IEPs and that multi-sensory strategies MUST be included as part of their appropriate education. President Obama just recently signed the READ ACT which designates money for dyslexia research. In the past few years, Kentucky has been one of the most forward thinking states on education issues. Why stop now? Why not be the first state to fully implement as state wide system of early identification, teacher training, and implementation of multi-sensory interventions? We are BEGGING Dr. Pruitt and the Kentucky Department of Education to designate a Dyslexia Task Force to look into how to do exactly that....we have to #SayDyslexiaKY!!!!</p> |
| Same | <p>How should we celebrate school success? Most importantly...stop pitting school against school. This creates animosity and an environment subject to cheating and unfair practices. If you don’t think it happens...think again! Students!!!! You celebrate students!!!! All students for all purposes. It’s heart breaking to only see pictures of the proficient and distinguished students hanging in hallways...what about the students who can draw portraits that look identical to the subjects? The students who can sing better than those on American Idol? The students who can debate well enough to run for political office? What about the students with leadership skills so developed they could run the school they are currently enrolled? Celebrate ALL students for ALL talents. Schools that show improvement should be celebrated....look at individual school growth. Do NOT look at one school compared to another. You cannot compare a Fayette Co. school to a Knott Co. school! The resources are different, the economics are different, the cultures are different and the needs are different. Something near and dear to me (because I know so many of the previous winners through my teacher leader work and advocacy)Teacher of the Year Awards. This is a status, a dream, that very few teachers every achieve. Those that do, are very deserving and I admire each and every one of them, but I have one small issue with the program. The Kentucky Department of Education issues a TOY Award to an elementary, middle, high, and overall each year. I’ve done a little research and found that very few (if any) special education and related arts teachers are ever chosen for these honors. To be a Kentucky Special Education, music, art, PE, drama, etc. Teacher of the year a teacher must be a paying member of a specific organization, such as, the Council for Exceptional Children or Music Education Association. Is it fair that we have to be paying members of an organization before being honored? Why can’t the Kentucky Department of Education add a Special Education and Related Arts Teacher of the Year Award to their lineup? Finally, I would like to say thank you. Thank you for listening to the teachers, students, parents, and community members. The voice of the people is strong in Kentucky. We are a proud people who want to be heard and taken seriously. We appreciate that you, Dr. Pruitt, even as an “outsider” (though, I wouldn’t call you that now) have taken a step in the right direction. You are the first to listen to us and that means so much to this proud Bluegrass state.</p> |
| SA - e-mail - 5/1/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: Need something that shows the success of schools and districts without requiring the lack of success of others. Need dashboard score in following areas: Achievement, Growth, Gap, Novice Reduction, Program Review, Effective teachers/admin, CCR, Graduation. One number score is misleading (think standards based grading)...there is no way to explain how a school/district is doing based on a score that combines multiple items that don’t easily talk to each other. One number score requires percentage weights which forces the "tyranny of or" instead of the "genius of and." This is why the town hall meetings were overwhelmingly attended by special interest groups for arts, PE, Health, etc... who never really answered any of the questions asked. Achievement is a by-product of growth...the first number looked at needs to be student growth!! Achievement, by itself, does not indicate growth, however, growth shows achievement. How growth is determined HAS to be improved. Determine what constitutes a year's worth of growth on whatever assessment we give. Compare with same age peers as long as a certain percentage of students are NOT guaranteed to have not made growth. Percentage of students making at least a year's worth of growth should count as the growth score. Students below 50%ile should have to make more than a year's worth of growth in order to count (this is needed in order to close achievement gaps). In the current system, a student who scores proficient one year and then proficient the next year is counted as making growth. Even if their raw score/scale score actually decreases. It is hard to support a system where something like this is done. Cannot change from year to year. Current system has had recalibration every year for the past 5 years. Program Reviews, World Language needs a lot of work, Focus should be on Global Competency, not foreign language teaching (unfunded mandate), A school should be able to score high on the world language PR without having to have a foreign language teacher. A special area class in elementary schools where students learn a foreign language one day a week is not going to make our students globally competent.</p> |
| C - e-mail - 5/1/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I really enjoyed meeting you and listening to the comments at the Town Hall. I retired from Education in 2002 in School Administration, boy how things have changed. I am now the Judge-Executive in Hart County and am really interested and concerned about our future workforce. My comments will be about doing a better job connecting and communicating with Public Education, Career Vocational and KCTCS sectors. This has to be a must in order to train our workforce. About 30-40% of our students do not go on to further their education after High School (Caverna and Hart County). There is a disconnect the first year a student graduates from High School. If they do not find a job they get lost in the system, maybe a 13th year. Technical Education must be funded better as more high school students pursue career pathways. This started about three years ago when more students wanted to pursue a pathway and no money was allocated for this.</p> <p>We have to adapt to our students and think outside the box on program offerings, such as coding, programing and specialized training, for our community needs. More soft skill requirements (real life), we got away from this with KERA and less teaching the test. As a person who has 27 years in education and 10+ in local government, I am very interested in helping you shape our education to fit the student to the community. Oh, one other thing, don’t forget about music. haha, just kidding.</p> |

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| C - e-mail - 5/1/16 | What do you expect from our schools? Parent & School (Joint Effort) – goal is developing skills to achieve ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE! For all young people– get back to American Dream...Major culture shift to where we are at– Family/ Home Ownership – Recent Data on Millennials Generation 35 yrs and under not achieving – Strapped Student Loan Debt – avg. \$30,000 – no down payment for a house! 1st Generation that will not do as well as parents! We created it! • Properly Educated State Leaders and Educators- Starting with those in Frankfort to Superintendents, Principals, Counselors and Teachers, Students and Parents about the LABOR MARKET (Local, State, Regional, National) NEEDS. What Current and Future Needs Exist FOR EMPLOYMENT? Greater Understanding of all Career Opportunities Locally. Vital to Economic Development! Producing employees for current and future needs! • Teachers need to be teaching not overwhelmed with paperwork...streamline the assessments process, etc |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? • Give EQUAL Value to College Careers and Non-College Career Paths – Strong Bias Against Non-College Jobs for decades! (interesting stat 1/3 of current US jobs require 4 yr degree...what about the other 70% - not all going to college...60% drop out or do not graduate...what then? Facing a critical shortage of workers in construction, manufacturing, healthcare and other industries... put equal to or greater emphasis on these OPPORTUNITIES then just going to college and find your way! o Educate, Promote and Expose educators, students and parents to the schools educational opportunities– allow them to visit/and/or to attend technical programs college and non-college interested students (4 week or 6 week increments)...i.e. engineering, (project lead the way), architect, agriculture...2 outcomes 1)helps overcome the image problem of the tech programs and 2) improves education and awareness for all. Provide Equal Monetary Support to all school programs. Technical Programs have minimal monetary support for years now. Needs to change. Key to economic development... must support or businesses will not come or expand in the area. MONETARY BENEFIT/CARROT for schools cannot be SOLELY based on how many students go to college! Not working. Model has to change! • Provide Greater Exposure for Students to Potential Career Paths (Get them there!) o Take students on local tours of potential employers – site visits to Hospital, Manufacturing, Construction Sites, Banking, Automotive, City, Restaurant, Law Firms, Engineering/Architecture firms. o Start Early with students on career opportunities...at least middle school age. Expose their parents as well. o RE-ESTABLISH Co-op and internships during the school year or in summer (not only for technical program students; those students that know interest (architecture, hospital, manufacturing, agriculture, restaurants, etc.) o Develop a greater link between schools and employers (TRACK Program, Apprenticeships, etc.). Industry must communicate their needs to the schools! |
| Same | How should we measure school success? • Capable of Economic Independence! ARE they completing high school? # of students graduating vs drop outs...why dropping out...find ways to reengage them (is it a part-time job while still in school) • Necessary soft skills – understand importance of attendance, being punctual, dress, minimal discipline problems, team player...New High School Class may need to teach this! • Education Completers...not just how many went to a university or post-secondary schools...track how many actually completed...received degrees, certifications, went on to employment, etc. (UNDERSTAND Family/Personal Issues can drive this). • Employment Placement – how many students acquired full-time employment once out of school and where? • Leave high school with employment based credentials...passed industry required certifications (welding, automotive, nursing test, etc)...have the basic skills • College bound students properly prepared ACT scores, need to collaborate with University's to determine areas of weaknesses. Cull out those who are not ready! |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? • Do Not Put all emphasis and support on the just the college track students • Give equal emphasis, support and opportunity to the 60% to 70% of students that will not acquire a 4yr degree. • Prepare them for Economic Independence! |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? • Give Equal Coverage of all successes. |
| P - e-mail - 5/2/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: As a resident of Kentucky, a mother of a child with Dyslexia and an active member of the Decoding Dyslexia Kentucky organization, I am reaching out to share our goal to provide each student with the tools they need to succeed in school. When my youngest was diagnosed with Dyslexia, I knew nothing about it and was uneducated as was the vast majority of my family, friends and my children's teachers and school administration. I poured over the information and quickly realized it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find any other disability affecting so many millions of children in the US, on which so much research has been done, and so very little information has reached the average teacher, doctor, parents and public. Over 30 years of independent, scientific, replicated, published research exists on dyslexia—much of it done through the National Institutes of Health, funded by taxpayer dollars. Dyslexics are handicapped by the and lack of education and available tools within their school system more than they are dyslexia itself. I encourage you expect and enable our schools to have TRUE Orton Gillingham based programs taught to teachers, rolled out throughout schools and shared with administration. Please review the attached information and let me know if I can provide any additional information. (Several PDF attachments to e-mail) |

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| P - e-mail - 5/2/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: It has come to my attention that you, in fact, do listen to the concerns of those who are willing to share. It is more my hope that you hear the concerns, and chose to bring about change for a large group of people who sincerely and desperately need your support. My family has lived in this beautiful state for 15 years. We have 6 children, three of whom started school in the state in which we are from. Our 3rd child was diagnosed in that state with Dyslexia, where we received private intensive and expensive tutoring until we moved to Kentucky. We were welcomed here by kind, warm people who renewed our faith in humanity by their polite hospitality, loyalty to people and traditions and the general practice of doing what's right, because it's right. And then, the kids started school. Though we had already been on our journey with Dyslexia at the helm, our experience here, in Boone County Schools set us back 50 years and a day.... #3 was the first of 4 children in our home to be diagnosed with Dyslexia. The heartbreakingly inadequate educational experience that we had with him, led us to find alternate schooling for the last three through elementary school. The public school was lacking in awareness, understanding, knowledge, empathy, respect and accountability. Our son was one of many students, who we know personally, that exited their public education with the belief that they were "retarded," because that is literally what they were told by many, and how they were treated. Where many of them have found their niche in life, and have moved on, happily, those years will never leave them. We are familiar with many of the statistics related to Dyslexia. The percentages that put it into nice neat categories that we can't seem to change. *15-20% of society is has a language based learning disability, likely Dyslexia to some degree. *80% of children with an IEP have reading difficulty and 85% of those are Dyslexic. *According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 38% of all fourth grade students are "below basic" reading skills. *Nationwide 20% of the elementary school population is struggling with reading. 20-25% of all adults read at the lowest level, 5% are considered non-literate (National Center for Education statistics). *62% of non readers dropped out of high school. *30% of children with Dyslexia also have at least a mild form of AD/HD. *According to a study done at the University of Texas Medical Branch in conjunction with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (published 2000) (Education Update Online), the prevalence of Dyslexia in the prison population is 48%. Where these numbers tend to make us feel overwhelmed and helpless at times, in a system that isn't equipped to teach all students, there are other facts that give us hope. *Accordning to Austin Learning Solutions (Sources- ADA, IDA, The Dyslexia Center, The Dyslexia Foundation and The Child Mind Institute), Over 50% of NASA employees are Dyslexic. *Dyslexia runs in families (offering the opportunity to screen much earlier) *People with Dyslexia excel, or are even gifted, in areas of art, computer science, design, drama, electronics, math, mechanics, music, physics, sales and sports. (Why wouldn't we want to foster these strengths?) *Dyslexia is not tied to IQ. People with Dyslexia can fall anywhere in the IQ range. Having Dyslexia does not indicate mental deficits. Where I could go on for pages with facts and theories, I think you get the idea. I have been at this for 20 years, and through 4 children with a range from mild to profound Dyslexia. And though I was diligent and determined, actively seeking help and information consistently, I've been up against something far bigger than myself or my desire for the success of my children, all along. We believe in education. It has always been an absolute that our children would attend college or a trade school, whichever their desire. Yet, in spite of our blood sweat and tears, #3 'dropped out' a few months before he was to graduate high school. We can say that he didn't work hard enough that he gave up, that it was his responsibility to get his education. But we can also say the there were teachers who didn't even look at the IEP. That there were teachers who publicly humiliated him by calling out his mistakes in class. That he was placed in classes with severely handicapped students who were not expected to gain any cognitive ability. I think is fair to say that that this was a school failure story. But nobody is accountable for this but the student. He is a bright, kind and capable individual who was not perfect by any means, but who deserved better than he got. The damage that was done within the walls of Kentucky schools is shameful, leaving him to reap what was sown by them still. #4 has never attended public schools and is doing well. We are grateful, but it's costly.</p> |
| continued | <p>#'s 5 an 6 attend public school currently, and have for two years. We were told that due to a major lawsuit and some training the schools were much more aware, and maybe even enlightened. So we had a little faith and took the leap. Where there have been a handful of wonderful teachers, aides and support staff with the desire to teach, support or learn more to be able to help every child, we find that these few have to lay low, so to speak, as the majority don't care to comply and know too well how to convince the outside world that they are all doing what is expected. In reality, too many don't follow the IEP's, implement accommodations, or respect the child's privacy or disability. Self esteem and self worth have been effected, trusting teachers to be kind and to do what they are expected to do by career choice and law, believing in themselves and their abilities, have been just some of the challenges we've had to deal with. We've believed in the past, but in these last two years confirmed our theory, that the Free and Appropriate Education offered to students of Kentucky is smoke and mirrors. We find ourselves at a crossroad. #5 & 6 are to enter high school in the fall. We resent the fact that we have to really think about our options as it pertains to their education, instead of the natural progression into the public high school. The fact that we can't trust that their educational needs will be met in the school that, for all intents and purposes, is there to do just that, while making them feel comfortable and safe. These kids need a school who believes in them, someone besides their parents who are "suppose to". They need one who finds and focuses on their strengths instead of constantly telling them what is "wrong" with them and how they don't fit in. For years I have had teachers ask me what they should do for these kids. Ironically, I should be able to ask them the same question. How to fix this broken system? I don't have all the answers. I do know teachers need training. To know about Dyslexia, acknowledge it and be able to spot it, intervene at the earliest possible opportunity and help build the strengths in the student so that the student can continue to learn and build, themselves, with confidence. Understanding, Respect and Empathy for those who are Dyslexic (and with any other learning difference, for that matter) and those who need to learn about it. the need to work together, authentically collaborating for the betterment of the students. These things can't all always be taught, but they are imperative for ultimate success, and they can potentially be inspired by simulations done by professionals. Sometimes we just don't get something until we are given a different perspective. Unfortunately, in the end, we need good leadership and accountability. Its clear that we want our students to be accountable for their behavior. But how do we expect that in general when the vast majority of faculty and staff are simply not accountable for thrown behavior? If I were a different person, I might be quite wealthy from legal outcomes over the past 15 years. I, instead chose to spend my time and money with and for my children. Though Complaints, Due process and Legal action are potential a means to an end, I will never believe that they are the answer, but many do and will. So many of the points I've covered can help defuse these actions before they are necessary. All parents want, for the most part, is a solid education for their children by knowledgable and understanding adults. I think we get confused as to what success is. If we were to discuss what a successful adult or company is, it might differ from what a successful student or school is by the standards we've set. We don't take a literal, written ad scored test at work. Though we are tested in many ways on many days. But our success is determined by how well we facilitate something, create something, manage something or someone, or how well we put into action our personal set of skills to improve the outcome of our own, or a collective, situation, service or product. In this scenario, a child with dyslexia may thrive because they are "doing" something and able to work with their strengths. When given the opportunity to succeed, they typically will. I know we can't change the entire educational system, but in my experience, these are some things to consider if we want the outcome to change. If we want our kids, and I mean those from our communities and schools, to be the ones at NASA and APPLE and the other big, well respected companies who actually believe in the them, the 20% who just don't fit the cookie cutter mold, we have to step up and be willing to change. This email doesn't scratch the surface of our story. In light of all we've been through though, I hope that somehow we inspire some portion of the change that I know is coming. And I hope that Kentucky is at the forefront that movement. If, Dr. Pruitt, you feel so inclined to work towards solutions, please let me know what I can do to help. Feel free to contact me at any time if you'd like to discuss this issue further.</p> |

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| SA - e-mail - 5/4/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: As an elementary school educator and parent of 3 school age children, I would first like to say "hats off" to Kentucky for working diligently toward a better education for our students. With a downward economy in many school districts, including my own, it is very difficult to keep funding levels at both the district and state level moving in a positive direction. Without that funding it is challenging to continue providing programs for students that meet their individual needs as well as provide professional learning for all staff to keep them knowledgeable about current research and methods. With that being said, my greatest concerns are for the work load that has been placed on teachers and administrators with the multiple Program Reviews, CSIP, Achievement Gap Reports, Title 1 Reports, and TPGES. I understand that accountability in these programs and areas are important, but the time taken away from preparing for teaching, professional learning, and instructional leadership continues to increase as more and more components are added to each of these programs/reports. Also, the idea that one week of testing can measure the success and abilities of a large group of students and then be reported as the only progress of that school is absurd. I have students that are academically working well above their cognitive level and will never score above Apprentice in our current system, but I am so proud of the progress they have made and their attitude while doing it. I recently had a come to me crying after progress monitoring this last time before the test. His response to me.." I'm so sorry Mrs. Janet. I have done my very best all year, but I will never be good enough for the test." My heart broke. Why must such emphasis be placed on only one aspect of a child? His creativity is amazing and his work ethic commendable (and we celebrate that), but with a measured IQ of 82 he is most likely not going to excel in academics. What are we offering him as a reason to want to stay in school and continue his hard work ethic? I am exploring other options, but that takes training, funding, mind shift change, and where does that leave me in skills for "the testing game"? I definitely don't have the answers, but at the elementary level we definitely need a fundamental shift to the whole child and finding creative ways for all kids to succeed in life beginning at an early age. Identifying their strengths and weaknesses and finding ways to measure those that are not just academically driven, but driven by talents, work ethic, attendance, and basic skills (money, time, organization, health/wellness). These are all learned skills that are vitally important for becoming productive citizens. I would be happy to assist in finding a solution to the problem, but first and foremost the idea that this testing and review system are what drives our teaching/leading has to change.</p> |
| P - e-mail - 5/4/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: We are a military family and have lived in Kentucky for almost 2 years. When my husband received his orders, like most military spouses with children, I began researching the schools. My son is dyslexic and requires an explicit, sequential multisensory approach to teaching reading. The Orton-Gillingham approach is the only thing that has worked for him. I was devastated to find that the KDE had not taken a stance on dyslexia and the appropriate instruction that is required for a student with dyslexia to be successful. I panicked. I didn't want to move to Kentucky; I was so worried for my son. Thankfully, I am also an educator trained in Orton-Gillingham with an extensive background in special education. We chose to homeschool. I wasn't prepared to fight the battle in the public education system while my child suffered. I have paid out of pocket to continue my training in OG to be a better teacher for my child. But my heart is in the public schools. Every single child deserves to be able to read. In my opinion, it is a basic human right. I could list statistic after statistic, but that is not really my style. I want to speak to the heart of educators and beg for all students to receive what they deserve: A Free Appropriate Public Education. The only way Kentucky's students with dyslexia are going to receive FAPE is through an Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading, writing, and spelling. I expect all children to be screened in kindergarten for dyslexia. Dyslexia can be properly identified by age 5. There is no reason to wait until the child is already 2-3 years behind to screen. All teachers should be able to identify the basic characteristics of dyslexia so they identify a I expect all children with dyslexia to be given access to the appropriate Orton-Gillingham approach needed to become readers. Not only that, but to address their social-emotional needs. You see, students with dyslexia have average to above average intelligence. They KNOW there are struggling and it creates self-doubt. I have seen students withdraw and/or act out to avoid looking "stupid" in front of their peers. Not only that, but so many students with dyslexia also have ADD or anxiety. These needs must also be met by a school counselor with a background in special education. School psychologists must be able to identify dyslexia and assist in writing IEP goals that are attainable through appropriate instruction. I am asking that KDE establish a task force on Dyslexia with the goals of: Developing a KY Handbook on Dyslexia. Training teachers and administrators on dyslexia. Training school diagnosticians and/or school psychologists to identify students with dyslexia. Early screening in kindergarten for all students. Implementing the Orton-Gillingham approach in early intervention programs. I personally believe this can and should take place outside of Special Education. I began my teaching career in Texas where students with dyslexia were provided the appropriate instruction through 504. I believe this can and should be accomplished in the general education setting; either in class or in a pull-out program. However, in Texas it still takes too long to identify students; often not until 2nd or 3rd grade. Kentucky can do better and I would be honored to help in any way I can. I would love to have the opportunity to discuss this further. I can be reached at 606-723-9016.</p> |
| P - e-mail - 5/5/16 | <p>Miscellaneous Comments: I was unable to make the Education Town Hall at Northern Kentucky University. I am a member of Decoding Dyslexia - Kentucky and would like to offer my thoughts. My daughter was identified as dyslexic because her first grade teacher knew how smart she was yet was still struggling. I feel like my daughter is one of the lucky ones as she has received research based individualized tutoring since mid-second grade (her school uses Barton). What do I expect from Kentucky schools? I expect teachers to receive training on dyslexia using Orton-Gillingham strategies in the main classroom. I expect the teachers to not be overwhelmed with so much paperwork and out of the classroom responsibilities that they are too exhausted to do what they love – teaching. I expect the classroom sizes to be maxed out as my daughter is in a small classroom with 33 students this year. How should Kentucky schools celebrate school success? KPREP testing is not fair if a student is an "out of the box" thinker. Sure continue to use it but why not implement a test of hands-on, science based activities? The schools are under so much pressure to do well on KPREP that it filters down to the teachers and students. My normally laid-back children get stressed leading up to testing. Why not celebrate success of those 20% dyslexic students when they reach a goal, finish a book or help a friend. Why not increase funding for schools based on part KPREP and part other testing? Students lucky enough to qualify for an IEP are missing valuable lessons when pulled out of the classroom. Dyslexic students are not less intelligent but are made to feel that way. My school district supports dyslexia as a whole yet there are so many teachers in the 5 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high school who do not understand it.</p> |

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| SA - e-mail - 5/5/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I appreciate your openness to Superintendents, and community members in the Commonwealth to the new assessment and accountability system. I have several thoughts about some things that I believe the state should consider for our new assessment and accountability model for the students of this commonwealth. I along with my capable staff have been brainstorming about things we like and things that we don't care for with our present system. Our district is larger than most, and this creates issues that small districts don't even know exist. I would like to also say that we are a large district, but also test in the distinguished category. We understand the current system, and have the capacity to thrive within that framework. Here are some areas of accountability that we would like to be changed: Having a 4-year and 5-year graduation cohort is confusing. Eliminate the 4-year cohort and allow the 5-year cohort to determine labels and accountability. For program reviews, I would like to do a superintendent assurance that we are implementing these programs with the idea that audits be put in place to determine the fidelity of our programs. For example we could send a two minute video of our marching band or our choir to validate our music programs. I know you have heard this, but we are spending way too much time at the school and district level with the current model we have. Novice reduction should not have multiple subpopulations. Why not just 1 group of non-duplicated gap? Large schools are penalized multiple times when students are included in several gap populations. Small schools may not have 10 students in special education, etc. Multiple subpopulations in growth has unforeseen consequences as well. Large schools are penalized multiple times for students that are in several gap groups. Alternative assessment: Alternative Assessment students should not count as dropouts. These students are completing their programs and receiving certificates of achievement which should be the equivalent to a diploma for these students. When a large school has a high graduation goal, the number of FMD students can actually prevent the school from achieving their goal. Alternative Assessment scores at the P/D level are restricted to 1% or less of the district's population of accountability students because of a US Dept. of Education rule. If we are expected to push all students to be P/D, then any student that reaches that level should be credited to the district regardless of the number. We put resources in place to help those students, but don't get to count them in accountability. Our new system needs to align grades 3-11. Our current system, KPREP and ACT/EOC are two very different systems. Some strong points regarding accountability: CTE included with KOSSA and industry Certs., 5-year cohort Graduation rate, Multiple opportunities for students to meet college benchmarks (ACT & Kyote). The Compass is phased out as of June 15th with no replacement. I believe districts that offer great educational opportunities for their students deserve to get credit for those commitments. I believe districts that offer multiple AP opportunities, PLEW opportunities in K-12, Young Entrepreneurs Academy, and other opportunities for our students should be given a level of status above districts that do none of the above. We are not given funding to do this, but we know it is the right thing to do. |
| KDE - 5/5/16 | What do you expect from our schools? A safe environment for our children. This means physical safety, as well as safety from abuse and harassment and a building that does not pose health hazard to our children. Transport children to and from school safely. The school bus must provide a safe environment for children where they can travel in peace. Innovate the elementary school children transport system where the small children wait outside for the school bus and parent's vehicles. I have noticed that many kindergarten and first grader's noses are at the level the cars and buses exhaust fumes are. Provide quality education that enhances the lives of our children, families and communities. Celebrate diversity of thought as well as of people from various background, race, ethnicity, socio economic status, religious belief. Build capacity to serve the whole student: cognitive, emotional, creative and pragmatic side of the student as well as prepare them for a pluralistic world where co-existence is the norm, not the exception. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Safe schools. Bully proof zone. Drug and alcohol free environment. Teachers and administrators who are swift at dealing with problems that threaten the physical and mental wellbeing of our children. Provides equity to all school children. This should include the academics, sports and technology, as well as students having access to school nurses, psychiatrists and guidance counselors. Currently schools serve breakfast and lunch to students. In the modern era, there are stress in children's and their parent's lives that is more acute than hunger in some cases-- we need to be proactive in dealing with this before children graduate from high school. Small class size. Most modern parents have only a few children at home and all of us know the amount of work it takes to raise children. We do not need to collect data to show the inverse relationship between school quality and class size. Facilitates critical thinking ability of the student, allows innovation. Although scripted text and structure is important because it enables us to teach large amount of children in shorter timeframe, we need to allow students to think differently than their teachers and parents. Allows students to consider different perspectives without losing student's own identity. Be supportive if the student develops a different identity than the societal norm except when such identify promotes violence, hate, suffering for people. |
| Same | How should we measure school success? While there is nothing wrong with current academic measurement of student and school success, we need to think about adding other measurements such as social intelligence and grit. The new science standards and project based learning is a great way to learn -- this allows active learning and engages students. Somehow we need to capture this in the new accountability system. And this should not be limited to only science subjects, it should include the arts and the humanities as well. Competition is good, and winning is always better. At the same time, we know that everyone cannot win first place in the science bowl, or debate competition or poetry contest. That means as educators we need to define and measure success in such a way that all children can develop their full potential. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? Equity, equity, equity. Engage the community, lawmakers, parents so that we can get what we need for our children. No more falling victim to budget cuts, or excuse that others are the cause of our failures. Recruit good teachers and administrators and KDE should lead the way. Just having a great commissioner is not enough, we need every KDE director, manager, employee to be the good citizens that we are asking our principals, teachers and students to be. For example, promoting "bully-free zone" at schools will not work if KDE has bullies as director/manager. If we expect principals to deal swiftly with such problems, similar issues need to be dealt with promptly at KDE as well. Allow students to learn differently. For example, a student who is interested in Jazz might be very good at physics. http://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/schedule-for-tuesday-april-26-2016-1.3553130/meet-the-physicist-who-brings-scientist-s-touch-to-jazz-1.3553135 . Like people, children are influenced by their environment. So, sustaining an enriched environment that is conducive to learning and character building will produce successful students and schools. Study successful schools, learn from them and adopt methods that may work for underperforming schools. Allow school children from kindergarten to high school to voice their opinion of the world they would like to live in and their proposal of how to get there. We might actually learn something from our children! |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? This will vary from region to region, school to school, student to student. Having plurality in the definition of student and school success would allow students and schools to celebrate success their way. We should not wait for a big award or accomplishment to celebrate success. Celebrate small success, teach coping skills for success and failures. Sometimes acknowledgement of the success is enough. This can be done by a simple note or letter, a certificate. |
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| KDE - 5/5/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: 1. As we move into the new accountability model, I hope we can explore the use of computer adaptive testing to determine that children make at least one year's growth (looking at students both above and below grade level). The issue will be determination if educators can be held responsible for grade level standards they are not teaching (example: Sally is in grade 4 but tests at grade 8 level or conversely a student struggles to read at her 4th grade placement level, however has grown from 1st to 2nd grade level.) 2. We need to find a way to ensure that kids are taught all the content at the designated levels and not just tested levels. (Ex. Science at 4th and So. St. at 5th.) |
| KDE - 5/5/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: When speaking with educators you commonly hear, “we need time.” Working with the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) we too have realized the need for time. When considering changes to the accountability system the need for districts to have time to plan, improve infrastructure to support implementation, and to provide follow-up support when trying to make improvements is needed. Some of the feedback from the field has been we need to impact test scores next year! Regardless what program, practice, innovation a district chooses to adopt, the students will never experience the benefits if they never receive the innovation as intended. Without time and a process to strengthen the districts system to support implementation we will continue the cycle of funds being wasted on one-shot trainings, teachers frustrated with the next shiny program the district has adopted, and most of all students not receiving interventions the schools feel they are providing. |
| KDE - 5/5/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: We have to make sure that we can translate the "old" accountability system to the new one. The last change created lots of questions from parents about why their child's school's score had changed so much.....how did their child's school go from being perceived as excellent to one that was much lower in the scoring scale. This doesn't mean that we need to ensure schools are ranked (I agree with the Commissioner's opinion that we need to find a way to transition away from that as an agency), but we do need to be able to easily explain why a school's score changed dramatically from one year to the next (from the current system to the new one) in situations where that occurs. We need to work at turning around test/achievement scores quicker to schools and students than we do now. If schools do not receive test results back until September or October then a third of the school year has passed. We must work to streamline the process so that educators can began disaggregating test data at the beginning of school and not 2-3 months into it. |
| KDE - 5/6/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Thanks for seeking input to guide the changing accountability process. Being a business and industry liaison for OCTE, I often work more with non-educators. Listening to employers about the problems in education tends to give a different perspective and I would like to share their collective feedback that I hear almost weekly. Educators needs to stop ‘silo-ing’ themselves and realize how much of an impact they have on the local and state economy. Administrators and counselors need to understand that not everyone has to go to college to be successful. Educators need to schedule their “A and B” students in technical classes as well as AP classes. Every student needs to be ‘career ready’ even if they are going to college. Students need to get back to basic math skills. A welder, carpenter, electrician, machinist etc. does not need Algebra II. They need to know technical math in context and how it relates to their career pathway. Employability skills/soft skills/workplace essential skills etc. have to be incorporated at all levels of education. Students can’t pass a drug test. While we know that there is only so much educators can do about numbers 4 and 5 if it's not reinforced at home, it is something employers charge to us. One effective solution that I have seen is offering co-op education. Employers are then our partners in reinforcing both the employability skills and the need to be drug-free. On a personal note, I appreciate you taking a hard look at the ‘accountability game’ that some districts are playing. While in the beginning the changes made educators take a ‘fresh look’ at CTE, it now seems to just be a numbers game sometimes instead of what is best for the student. I know that I am preaching to the choir on that one... |

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| T - e-mail - 5/6/16 | What do you expect from our schools? A safe, supportive, resource-rich environment where all students can learn to their full potential, through the deliberate and meaningful work of teachers, administrators, and support staff. |
| Same | What school characteristics are most important? Safety, Access to the arts and extra-curriculars, High-quality content instruction with real-world applications |
| Same | How should we measure school success? School success should be measured based on growth against itself and individual teacher and student successes, with demographics and other hardships taken into consideration when calculating its' "success." It should not be defined by excessive/expensive standardized testing. |
| Same | How do we ensure all schools are successful? By providing adequate fiscal and curricular resources and the opportunity for peers and peer schools/districts to collaborate to share best practices and success stories! |
| Same | How should we celebrate school success? Public accolades via the media, celebration events for students and teachers, opportunities to showcase exemplary student work. |
| T - e-mail - 5/6/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for listening to the thoughts of shareholders! I am a special education teacher and have worked with grades ranging from k-8 over the last 10 years. I would like to provide my thoughts on teacher evaluations and student progress. 1. Over the past 2 years, several days of my time have had to be devoted to my SGG and PGP at the very early part of the school year. This is a time when we need to be reviewing student files, adjusting student schedules, reaching out to parents, and preparing for the school year's instruction. I do not want to spend precious hours upon hours filling out paperwork. Please make the TPEGS process more simple, and PLEASE do not ask us to think about TPEGS until the 2nd 9 weeks of school. 2. As a special education teacher, I see a wide range of abilities. Over the years, I've worked with ADHD students who were nothing short of brilliant! Many are capable of being proficient and showing regular growth. However, many of my students have real learning deficits. Measuring their progress by grade-level core standards is not a realistic approach. I'd like to see an evaluation process that does not hold teachers and students accountable with a method other than the current growth measures. |
| C - e-mail - 5/6/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I am writing to you in regard to the need for a new revised accountability system for Kentucky Public schools. I recently had the opportunity to work with the Dubai School Inspection Bureau using the United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework. The inspection framework is based on a system used in Scotland. The Scottish system was adapted to meet the needs of US certified schools in Dubai. School inspections are structured around six performance standards and conclude with an overall performance judgement. The performance standards include: Students' achievement, Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills, Teaching and assessment, Curriculum, The protection, care, guidance, and support of students, Leadership and management. The choice of these performance standards is based on research into school effectiveness. Students' performance and students' personal development form the basis for the first two standards - keys to school effectiveness. Research tells us the most powerful factors determining school effectiveness are quality of teaching, curriculum, care, and leadership. The last four standards address these factors. Working with a team of nine professional leaders in education from all over the world, I found the system not only to be a thorough evaluation of a school but also to be fair. I would like an opportunity to share this system with you. If you are interested in learning more about the system you can also find the framework in its' entirety on the website – www.khda. Please feel free to contact me by email at brenda.owen@twc.com. Dr. Renee Taylor, former Eastern Kentucky University professor has worked with the Dubai inspection system for a number of years. She is usually here in the states in the summer. Dr. Carol Gabbard, retired Eastern Kentucky University Teacher Educator has been to Dubai on two separate occasions inspecting schools. |
| T - e-mail - 5/9/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Growth needs to continue to be used as a part of the accountability system and something needs to change about the Graduation Rate. For example, if a student enters in as a Freshmen then moves his or her Sophomore year to another school then that original high school should not have to get a bad score for the graduation rate due to that student moving. Also, if a student transfers from one school to another during the school year depending on how much of that year was at one school then the score should count for that school. For example, a student that transfers in one month prior to testing then his or her score should count for the school they attended last. Lastly, schools should not be placed into Focus or Priority status due to MAP scores. MAP should be one of those tests used to measure growth only and to identify those areas for students to continue to improve in. What ever the system is, all schools need to be made aware of the system and know before school starts how they are going to be judged for that school year. The system needs be be fair for all schools and realistic, yet challenging. Teachers need to be in the know!! |
| SA - e-mail - 5/10/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: As a long time educator, (34 years) I feel the testing should be more ACT type. I believe strictly multiple choice for all subject areas. I think this would better prepare our students to be successful when taking the ACT. |

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| SA - e-mail - 5/10/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: I believe that middle schools would benefit from an ACT type test in place of KPREP. ACT is what the high school is assessed by for college and this would benefit them best in preparing for high school and college. You could still assess growth from year to year. |
| T - e-mail - 5/13/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: First, I want to say "Thank You" for taking time to travel around the state to listen to those of us in the trenches. This is the first time in my short nine year stint in Kentucky that I have ever witnessed anything of this magnitude. As I try to absorb all that was mentioned, discussed, and talked about I want to reinforce the importance of the Arts in education. As I have witnessed personally, the music aspect of the arts, has declined in some areas across the state and that concerns me. Through the arts students have the opportunity to create, perform, respond, and connect. I have seen my students blossom into great champions in the classroom because of the discipline that happens through the arts. As a musician, practicing and rehearsing are absolutes. When we transfer that discipline over to the regular education classroom, the students that are involved in the arts excel. It is vitally important that students, especially in the primary and intermediate years, are given the opportunity to be exposed to as much as possible within the realm of the arts. MUSIC is: Math, language, history, reading, sCience. As I incorporate all of these learning disciplines into the music classroom, I engage the students in collaborative learning through all areas and styles of learning. Students learn in different ways, through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. In the arts classrooms you find each of these styles which helps to connect to each student. As we continue to work together to make each student's time in the Kentucky educational system meaningful and purposeful, keep the arts as a focus on student learning and creativity. The arts are vital; the arts are important; and the arts are meaningful. Thank you for taking time to meet with us across the state. I look forward to working with you as we, together, make Kentucky the best it can be for the students of the great Bluegrass State! |
| T - e-mail - 5/18/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: Thank you for soliciting input. I am a teacher with 17 years of experience in a Kentucky public school. I want to measure high school student science success through actual science practices instead of a factual based recall biology eoc. I LOVE the NGSS!! I wonder how we can assess NGSS in the high school since there are so many different ways to implement the curriculum over three years. I did not feel that the CATS method of assessing everything in the junior year was effective in allowing us to address individual student misconceptions or really even the school due to different test forms given to different students and not all students being assessed on all standards. As a Chemistry teacher I would welcome a science portfolio or a set of different tests divided into life science, earth science, and physical science. These separate tests could be administered at any point during a student's career at the appropriate time based on a school's scope and sequence. |
| T - e-mail - 5/19/16 | Miscellaneous Comments: It is refreshing to see that someone has finally realized that teachers are doing everything but teaching our children. The amount of paperwork teachers have to do is ridiculous! The PGES requires an unreal amount of documentation and work on the part of the teacher, but also on the part of administrators. Schools need more control over what the teachers need to do and how it needs to be evaluated. The accountability system for teachers and schools needs a major overhaul. While you didn't specifically ask about this, I still want to voice my opinion as an educator about the amount of testing required. My students are tested at every turn it seems. As sophomores, they are required to take the CERT three times a year, the On-Demand writing test and the End of Course assessment for English, and possibly, for biology and algebra II. Students are worn down by all this testing and have adopted a severe case of apathy towards said testing—not trying to excel, but merely trying to pass. As the system stands now, this hurts the credibility of the teacher and the school system at large.Let's face it—novice is absolutely all some students are capable of, but the teacher and/or school are penalized for the number of novices. It is unfair to compare student to student—it's like comparing apples and oranges. The data that should be considered is how well each student progressed as an individual. Any legislation that can be enacted reducing the unfair accountability for both teachers and school systems can only help our students in the long run. |